



**GENEVA CENTRE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF  
ARMED FORCES (DCAF)**

**POLICY PAPER**

**THE IRAQ WAR:  
IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

*Alyson J.K. Bailes*

Geneva, August 2003

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### **DCAF Policy Papers Series**

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### **About the Author**

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# **THE IRAQ WAR: IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

*Alyson J.K. Bailes*

The drama and novelty of the events surrounding the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq by a US-led coalition, and the scale of the repercussions for international life and opinion, make it not only tempting but almost obligatory to try to draw up an early reckoning of the consequences. Doing so as early as mid-2003, however, involves obvious problems and pit-falls. With the situation within Iraq still unstable and many aspects of future national and institutional roles still wide open, it is still far too soon to judge what may be the final balance-sheet of profits and penalties, winners and losers. Secondly, in the analysis of this crisis just as in the way it was launched, there is a tendency for Western visions (and West-West arguments) to predominate over expertise on, and the actions and reactions of, relevant players within the 'larger Middle East' region; yet common-sense suggests that the latter will have more impact on the final outcome than most current estimates allow for. Thirdly, a commentary limited – as this one must be – to the various dimensions of international security and political relations affected by the crisis cannot do justice to the commercial, economic, social and cultural dimensions of potential fall-out, which however may ultimately affect a much greater number of human beings than even the most far-reaching of the security effects discussed here.

In defining the starting-point and background for a security-oriented analysis, I would like to begin with a paradox. After the end of the Cold War, many analysts predicted that the Western democratic community would fall apart if the two sides of the Atlantic could not find the discipline of a new threat to unite them. Now, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the attention of Euro-Atlantic societies has been drawn to threats that are certainly common to the whole wider West, and indeed to many other states of different backgrounds which care about their societies' and citizens' safety: transnational terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and the actions of violent tyrannies which ignore all the norms of internal and international behaviour. However, at least in the short term, the rapid rise to primacy of this new

security agenda after 11/9/2001 seems to have done more to split than to unite the world's leading powers. There have been deep divisions between Europeans, between the US and Europe as a whole, and between the US and other important nations. These disagreements, moreover, are not limited to specific aspects of anti-terrorism and counter-proliferation policy – or to specific cases for action like Afghanistan and Iraq. They also extend to other important dimensions of global governance such as the rule of law, the legitimacy of military action, equal answerability (e.g. for war crimes), the meaning of strategic stability and associated restraints, as well as issues more indirectly related to security such as international trade and competition, the protection of the environment and climate change. The results of this turbulence in the last 18 months have included serious challenges to the authority and effectiveness of the United Nations, and have aggravated the problems which the European Union and NATO face in handling their already very tough challenges of adaptation combined with their biggest ever enlargement.

However, the very seriousness of the challenge makes it important that we should not exaggerate it or picture it (tempting though the escape from responsibility might be) as more intractable than it is. Over-extrapolation from the short term and over-concentration on the dark side of the picture should both be avoided. What kind of Atlantic crisis is this, in the middle of which NATO has agreed on its biggest ever enlargement and most sweeping extension of its military role; when all members have agreed to let it take over the coordinating role for the ISAF force in Afghanistan and have kept open the door for it somehow to support future peace-keeping in Iraq; the US and Europe as part of an international 'quartet' have launched the boldest ever plan for peace between Israel and Palestine; and US and European trade commissioners are working hard for a common front to rescue the Doha round? What kind of breakdown is this in EU cooperation which has witnessed a remarkable unity of the EU's leading governments on the constitutional changes that should be made as the result of the present European Convention; absolute EU unity versus the US on current trade disputes; the closest approach yet to agreement on the tough issue of reform of the Common Agricultural Policy; and a remarkable reconciliation between Greece and Turkey and potentially between Turkey and Europe, thanks not least to Turkey's essentially very prudent conduct during the Iraq war?

What we have seen in the Euro-Atlantic area over these months has been something like a wild garden where some cherished plants are being trampled on or struck with disease, but other hopeful new shoots are appearing at the same time, and it remains very hard to say which of these phenomena will decide the shape of the future harvest. Added to these complexities is the dynamic of action and reaction over time which has, by mid-2003, clearly started to assert itself, with conscious (and at least partly productive) efforts being made to restore a modus vivendi between the US and Europe. The Europeans are doing their best to pull back together, institutions are looking for therapeutic and diversionary activities, and individual nations are drawing back to reflect on their mistakes and lick their wounds. In the political life of Western nations, the summer of 2003 has been a time for inquests and recriminations on a grand scale. It is, of course, too soon to say whether this phase of reaction (especially in its centripetal and reconciliatory aspects) will prove more lasting and authoritative than the positive creations or the scars of the original crisis. But it is also too soon to judge whether the lessons of action or those of subsequent reflection will have the greater impact on key nations' thinking about the handling of international security in the longer run.

One reason why analysts and the public at large have so often debated last year's developments in black-and-white terms is that the US tends to dominate the Western security scene not just militarily and politically, but also to some extent intellectually. US analysts are known for the clarity and originality of their world-view and their ideas are quickly picked up to dictate the themes of debate and media commentary in many other countries. The influence of Robert Kagan with his thesis of Europe having 'moved beyond power' is only the most obvious example. Such sharply defined new ideas can be very useful in shaking up and testing our own way of thinking. However, they are not always representative of the entirety or the balance of US thinking at any given time, and they may not always accurately predict or reflect the overall trend of US action, and the dominant ideas they produce will not necessarily stay dominant in the US itself for long. History shows that concepts are sometimes expressed in their sharpest and most combative form when they are on the verge of being overtaken. This suggests that thinkers in other countries need to maintain a certain vigilance and critical faculty and to be ready, as it were, to look around the edges of the debate currently occupying centre-stage, lest the best line of sight to the future may turn out to lie somewhere different. It also raises, however, a

possibility whose implications are not wholly reassuring: that players with a longer attention-span and/or a more legalistic way of enshrining their policy choices may continue to act in imitation of or in counter-reaction to a given US orthodoxy well after the US itself has ceased to find it adequate.

Turning back now to the specific lessons and implications arising from the story of Iraq since President Bush first announced his determination to deal with the threat from Saddam Hussein in a speech of March 2002, the following analysis will fall largely into two parts:

- features which were already inherent in the contemporary security environment, but have been more clearly highlighted and consciously appreciated as a result of these events; and
- genuinely new situations and forces for change created by the events themselves.

### **Inherent Features High-Lighted by the Crisis**

The first existing fact illustrated by the Iraq campaign, as by the régime change in Afghanistan a year before, is that the US is indeed now the world's only superpower. It is capable of mobilizing the latest military technologies and tactics for rapid victory at long range, on a scale and in a combination unavailable to any other nation, and with only very modest help from outsiders. With less than 90,000 personnel deployed on the ground (as against Iraqi forces totalling at least 350,000) and in the space of less than a month, the US, UK and smaller contributors put an end to Saddam's regime and to any organized resistance. Despite subsequent problems it remains true to add that they have, by and large, held down a territory of 440,000 sq. km. and 23 million people with around double the initial force, and that casualties on both sides have remained remarkably low. Moreover, events surrounding the conflict have also underlined the US's global diplomatic and economic reach and its ability to bring major and rapid pressures for change to bear upon countries in every continent. Some visible results like the number of countries in the 'coalition' and those who would have voted for a UN Resolution licensing the invasion may be less than impressive, but the real tale of US influence is perhaps better told in the remarkable

restraint and caution shown by Iraq's neighbours both during and after the fighting, and the absence of any serious attempt to make mischief by larger powers like Russia and China. Where the US cannot win friends it still appears more than able to deter (conventional) enemies.

The second is that the US's ideas about how it is necessary and possible to use this power are (currently) quite different from the security policy of most states in the modern world. In particular, the doctrines introduced in the US's 2002 national security strategy document about maintaining the US's present strategic superiority for as long as possible at all costs, and about the legitimacy of preemptive attack where necessary on opponents who might threaten this, are goals which most modern states not only lack the strength to aim at but would think it improper to express in these terms. The preemption doctrine in particular is one for which there is clearly no cover in the normal reading of international law. The current US Administration's conviction that these policies are not only admissible but necessary can most simply be explained by the US's unique position as a country which has never experienced invasion, has never experienced peaceful multinational integration with equal partners as the Europeans have, and which therefore tends to see the preservation of its frontiers against either physical or legal intrusion as an absolute value: combined with the extraordinary shock and still-lasting trauma of the events of 11/9/01. Faced with evidence of what happens when enemies of its whole society break through that society's defences, the US now not unnaturally sees an imperative to keep possible threats as far away as possible, and has the power to do so, and sees no other reason strong enough to restrain it from doing so. And when acting at a distance, of course, it seems easier to use force because the consequences are less likely to rebound directly against the mainland. All this said, however, American leaders have in the past built very different policies upon the same fundamental interests, including at times when their society and citizens did seem directly threatened e.g. by Soviet nuclear weapons. The outside world should not be more rigid than Americans themselves in excluding a return or advance to some other policy, especially in the light of the costs of a purely power-based strategy (which is something I shall come back to later).

The third point is that the US does not at present feel any compulsion or see any reason to operate through international institutions – be it the UN, G8 or NATO –

except to the extent that these can bring the practical benefits it is looking for at any given time. As Defense Secretary Rumsfeld put it soon after 9/11, for the moment 'the mission makes the coalition'. Apart from ideological reasons, this may be explained to some extent by the fact that the US has moved out of one historical phase of existential dependence on the loyalty of Allies, following the end of the Cold War (which had made it difficult for Washington to hold the Soviet threat at bay unless it also worked with other Western democracies to hold it in check in Europe). A force-based strategy with constantly shifting targets logically reduces the value of territorially based alliances, at least in the military dimension and while the US considers its own military strength sufficient. This is however not yet the end of history, and it is possible that the Rumsfeld view is only a staging-point to a time when the steadily advancing realities of globalization will bring Americans to acknowledge a new kind of dependence on regulated global order and cooperation, and on like-minded countries to help run it, in the economic and then in the political and strategic fields as is already the case for several non-military threats.

The fourth and last observation in this category is that there is no other single pole of power at the moment able to block US actions or to compel policy changes against the US's will. On the contrary, since 9/11/01 the prevailing tendency has been for Europe, Russia, China and the leading powers of other regions to show considerable prudence in the face of US power and to avoid, or limit in time, any stance of open opposition to US goals. The strategies they have pursued have been a mixture of allying themselves with the US, seeking to profit from the US's policy goals and doctrines for their own purposes, separating themselves to focus on their own concerns, and/or modifying their behaviour in ways designed to avoid US intervention in their own affairs or those of their region. Such Western states as have openly opposed US actions, for instance by refusing to contemplate UN cover for armed intervention in Iraq and/or then declaring it illegal, may have produced all kinds of effects elsewhere but did not actually impede the US at all.

The European Union was particularly criticised during the various phases of the crisis for failing either to maintain its own unity, or to come up with any coherent alternative to US policy on terrorism, Iraq or Afghanistan. It is reasonable to attribute this to the EU's total lack (at that point) of a coherent philosophy and mechanisms of its own for tackling problems outside the wider Europe, as well as to rivalries among its own

larger members. However, some of the same observations could equally well be made about Russia, which remains in a state of abnormal strategic weakness overall, and which in effect had even less influence after it joined the ‘anti-coalition’ than it might have done by temporizing with Washington. It is worth stressing the EU-Russian parallel because one of the lessons identified by many observers in this crisis is the weakening of any special emotional or moral character in the US/European relationship, as distinct from other actual and potential strategic ties. Machiavelli said that it was better to rule by love than by fear: but even those Europeans who stayed close to the US line in this crisis arguably did so with some underlying fear of how the US could behave when completely isolated, rather than from any true and spontaneous love of the new US philosophy.

## **Forces for Change**

In considering the new lessons and forces set in motion by the Iraq episode, I will start again with a paradox: namely, with findings about the limitations of US strength. One increasingly clear aspect of these at the moment is the difficulty that the US faces, for reasons of experience as well as doctrine, in rebuilding an orderly, effective and democratic regime in Iraq after destroying the old one. Not for the first time, it has been shown that the US military machine (both in its own characteristics, and because of persistent problems in inter-agency or multi-functional coordination) is better equipped for peace enforcement than peace keeping or building, better at destroying the bad than creating the good. Indeed, the very abnormalities that made Iraq crumble under the US assault go a long way to explaining the lack of resources and collaborators, and the complex treacherousness of the ground, for reconstruction now. Many actors and many dimensions of the situation cannot be controlled by military means, and those furthest removed from military solutions – restoring the infrastructure and public services, maintaining order and justice at street level, re-building political life and handling the delicate mixture of creeds and ethnicities – are precisely the most crucial both for Iraq’s future in practical terms and for the retrospective credibility and legitimacy of US action. The irony is that the US’s best hope of averting disaster on these fronts is clearly now to appeal for the help of other nations and institutions – as was implicitly recognized already on 22 May with the passing of the new UN Security Council Resolution. One possible lesson to draw is

that a great power may choose its own moment and justification for provoking a violent crisis and may win its proximate goal, but cannot expect thereby to lift the given situation out of the normal chain of crisis evolution and to escape the normal demands of crisis management. Another, to put it bluntly, is that the policy of forceful threat pre-emption is better designed to destroy old enemies than to create new friends, and in particular to create friends who are loyal to the US out of conviction rather than temporary self-interest. Yet a policy which has the main effect of creating enemies plus false friends or frightened friends is clearly likely to overstretch even the limits of the US's enormous strength in the long run.

Another kind of limitation is internal to the US, in the form of the limits of the bearing power of the currently rather unstable economy, the confidence and patience of American citizens, and the President's ability to enforce discipline among differing factions within the Administration. Predictably, popular approval ratings have fallen as time has gone on and as the costs in US lives and billions of dollars accumulate, and the Democrat opposition has felt less compulsion to refrain loyally from attacking weak points both in the handling of Iraq and in other policies. The US Administration has not been exempt from the back-lash which has hit other coalition leaders even harder over the reliability of claims about Iraqi WMD which were used to muster support for the attack, and it has come under fire even from its closest partners over apparent breaches of law and natural justice in its handling of captives from Afghanistan still detained at Guantanamo Bay. Finally, it is fair to recognise that the Bush Administration has consciously imposed certain limitations on itself and is still far from testing the potential application of its new doctrines to the limits. Even before the Iraq attack but quite clearly after, it has signalled for example that it will not pursue a military solution against the People's Democratic Republic of Korea, and that it favours the use of political and economic more than military pressures against Iran. One should add that at the micro-level it made sincere efforts to conduct operations in Iraq in a way that minimized the damage to people and natural resources.

The second lesson, which has been brought home by other recent events as well as Iraq itself, is that the kind of force which the US prefers to exert is only a very partial solution for the broader challenges of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. To strike at such dangers militarily it is necessary to know the real nature of the threat

and where to find it and it seems that even the best national intelligence cannot guarantee to do this for more than part of the time. More terrorists have been active and in different places, since the Iraq invasion than the US seemed to expect, while no significant stocks of NBC weapons have yet been found (or proved to have been destroyed by military action) in Iraq. It is important to understand that frustrations of this kind will continue to be a challenge regardless of whatever further refinements can be made in the US's superior military technology. This is something that specialists now studying the war's military-technical lessons and "network-based warfare" should also reflect on: the better one's chances of rapidly hitting the exact target, the greater the credibility of strategic (as well as tactical) action will depend on identifying the right targets in the first place. Moreover, there is some evidence that excessive concentration on attack and interdiction technologies tends to draw resources away from the necessary defensive measures, particularly where these require international cooperation (e.g. on anti-terrorist intelligence and WMD export controls) or the education and mobilization of societies under threat. And finally, some analysts would argue that excessively military and adversarial approaches can be directly counter-productive both in the case of terrorism and of proliferation: in the first case because new enemies are produced who may resort to terrorism, in the second because countries seeing themselves as possible targets of US action may believe that the proven and open possession of nuclear weapons will protect them.

The real question is, of course: if the Iraq method is not the full or best answer to WMD proliferation threats, what is? Simply giving up is no longer a solution. It is better understood these days how much the definite possession of NBC capacity by a problem State (even if something less than a "rogue") reduces the workable options available to the international community to deal with it. Widening the circle of nuclear and pre-nuclear players would thus give a truly 'asymmetric' tilt to global governance, as well as possibly triggering a runaway further expansion – as other States copied or tried to counter the first offenders – and posing all the other familiar threats to safety, health, and democracy (let alone the risk of terrorist acquisition). As the EU's new WMD strategy document implicitly recognizes, it is the shared task of all responsible States after Iraq, whatever their view of the US action, to help in trying to put these demons back in the bottle. And very few people, outside the most extreme US neo-cons and the 'rogues' themselves, would contest that strengthening the international legal instruments (and the monitoring and inspection capabilities)

embodying the formal universal barriers to WMD acquisition must be part of any new concerted strategy. The international codes tell us who the offenders are, and what would be necessary to bring them back in line; without the string of former UN Resolutions based on these codes the US action in Iraq would have lacked even such legitimacy as it had; and a mistrustful world after Iraq will be even less likely to credit either indirect or direct evidence of the presence of WMD (stocks or capacities) unless certified by a responsible international authority.

The tougher part is to identify what methods – more effective than in the past – can be used to guide, persuade, bribe, bully or compel states into conformity with these norms and into cooperation with the organs representing them. Coherent withdrawal therapies, tailored to specific national and regional cases, will have to expand their choice of instruments both beyond traditional arms control – to political, economic, general security, and in the last resort military measures – and within the realm of arms control, to recognize the equal relevance (e.g.) of export controls, collaborative arms destruction, and other restraints on local strategic competition. The toughest part of all will be to recognize that such a policy can only work with no exceptions. The Iraq and Iran problems will never be solved with a blind eye to Israel, nor countries like Japan be held back from temptation while we skirt around India and Pakistan. The general legitimacy of the non-proliferation approach will be even more fragile than at present if the ‘recognized’ nuclear powers do not continue the effort to strip their own arsenals to minimum levels, and cannot restrain themselves from further experiments (in offensive or defensive technologies) which risk triggering new rounds of strategic competition and asymmetric response.

The third lesson arises not so much from Iraq itself but from its juxtaposition with the SARS episode, a purely non-military/and non-intentional threat which in the event did more rapid and widespread damage to the world economy and to popular confidence than anything in Iraq so far. It was a reminder that more of the world’s people and economies are vulnerable to damage by non-military threats like disease, natural disasters and climate change than to any possible combination of ‘rogue state’ and terrorist action. It also showed clearly that no power in the world can hope to make any progress against this kind of challenge except by the fullest and most open international cooperation – in this particular case with a UN agency, the WHO. In this case also, it was China that was chastised for an initial attempt to deny openness

and go it alone, and – ironically but significantly – the US was only too ready to join in the chastising.

## **Institutional Effects**

When turning to the impact on individual institutions, it is necessary to repeat that the evidence so far is ambivalent as well as incomplete. The story of the UN in particular can be read from a fatalist or an optimistic perspective. To try to reduce it to the barest and most objective terms: there were three phases in the Iraq crisis where a UNSC Resolution was required: on two occasions (UNSCR 1441 and the post-war Resolution) it was achieved, and on the other, the draft was abandoned before a vote essentially because of the actions of a NATO member. As part of the bigger picture we may recall that there were no comparably serious problems at the UN over the handling of Afghanistan, even during the worst of the West-West splits; that the UN's new Counter-Terrorism Committee has continued to work during this period on the larger task of containing transnational terrorism with quite encouraging results, and that the role of WHO in the latest SARS crisis helped highlight the UN's vital capacity to tackle global threats of a non-military nature. Now, in mid-2003, the trend of development in Iraq and the associated modifications of US policy are generally read as indicating that more 'Iraqization' and 'multilateralisation' of the reconstruction are bound to come, with the UN itself accordingly winning back more and more competence (*à la* Afghanistan or Kosovo).

Overall, the crisis has highlighted the importance which the great majority of states in the world attach to the UN as a legitimating authority, as well as the various practical benefits of tackling multi-dimensional crisis management tasks in a UN framework. It has made clear that the most important divisions in the UNSC following the end of the Cold War are not necessarily of an ideological kind, but of an essentially political nature (involving strategic visions as much as principles) which can also divide close Allies. And it has shown that in the last resort, the UN will only be used to the extent that the world's greatest powers want to use it and are prepared to some degree to modify their national preferences to that end. This last point is sad and disturbing, but cannot be claimed to represent anything new. On the other side, one can argue that the differences of view which have been revealed by this crisis on the principles of

intervention and choice of tools for complex modern threats to global security are of a kind which only the UN could now resolve – and this has not necessarily always been true in the past (notably in the Cold War when the Western and Eastern blocs regulated strategic relations with scant regard to New York). The Polish Government's proposal for making a new independent review of the UN's role and principles in the field of international security looks very pertinent in this light: 2003 may seem a difficult time to attempt it, but when people are most anxious about the future the chance may be greatest to break out of stereotypes and to channel at least some of the tension into a search for new solutions.

The case of NATO is arguably simpler. The 2004 Enlargement and the new NATO-Russia relationship make NATO a continuing important force for security and stability within Europe, even if it is starting to withdraw from its direct military role in the Balkans. For the US, however, this role is no longer sufficient to justify the Alliance unless NATO can also become militarily active in solving crises outside the European region. During 2002 NATO adopted the doctrines and the military plans and structures necessary for this (possibility of global intervention, new Response Force and command structure, etc), which incidentally involved a major and probably irreversible step away from collective self-defence as its primary function. The question is whether a shared political will can be found among the Allies to use these assets. On the evidence of recent months the answer seems to be Yes, but only if a political initiative is taken outside NATO by various countries or organizations to request the use of Alliance capabilities. Germany and the Netherlands did this successfully in Afghanistan, Poland has got some way towards doing it in Iraq, and the EU as a whole has obtained NATO's services to support it in taking over the peacekeeping role in FYROM (and prospectively in Bosnia-Herzegovina).

Although it is too early to be sure, it looks very much as if NATO's role is shifting from a creator of generic common defence and security-building policies towards that of a (uniquely powerful) "tool-box"; from which military instruments can be picked up when the political conditions for using them have been generated elsewhere. It is possible that the Iraq experience will lead many Allies (not excluding France and at least some Americans) to rediscover NATO's 'instrumental' value also in the political sphere, as a dialogue channel across the Atlantic and a restraint, however modest, on US unilateralism. If so, the shock of the crisis might actually prolong the Alliance's

vitality, but only as a blip within the longer-term trend of narrowing NATO's competence base and eroding its centrality.

The European Union had its limitations cruelly exposed in this crisis, in the dimension of political unity as well as strategic vision and practical power. One may note that apart from its divisions on Iraq, the EU was not able during this time to compel real progress on the older Middle East conflict – where its policy was entirely united – unless and until the US was ready for its own reasons to exert new pressure. However, the past has already shown that the EU has unusual capacity to recover from such splits and humiliations because its shared commitments and interests are so uniquely wide and legally entrenched: or, in more general terms, because the process of European integration after 50 years has become essentially irreversible. Indeed, the European dynamic seems to be of a sort that compels an unending series of forward surges both in the EU's geographical frontiers and in its competence, a culture of 'running ahead' partly to leave shaming memories behind. As to the supposed old/new European division, one should never underestimate the EU's capacity to alter the general security culture as well as specific policies of countries who join it. Far more important in practice are the divisions between EU members who are inward-looking and conservative, and outward-looking and interventionist: and this line cuts right across the categories of small and big, Western and Eastern, Allied and non-Allied EU members.

What is important to watch now is whether the shocks and disappointments of the Iraq crisis will force a serious attempt to rise above these divisions and forge a lasting improvement in the EU's security and defence performance, rather as the Kosovo crisis was followed by the original launch of the CESDP (Common European Security and Defence Policy). There are more than a few hints of this in the consensus that is developing around a group of proposals for strengthening ESDP – and the EU's 'single voice' in external affairs generally – that have come up in the European Convention; in the recent adoption by EU Governments of a specific strategy and action plan against WMD proliferation and their approval of a general European strategy drafted by Solana, both of which contemplate the use of force in the last resort; in the fact already mentioned that the EU is launching or taking over an increasing number of operations in South-Eastern Europe, and its rapid and more than a little risky decision to mount an autonomous operation in the Congo. The weak

point, as ever, remains the level of European defence spending and quality of defence planning, and the general sluggishness of the Eurozone economy at present will not help in this – although the latest German plans for structural reform in the general economy as well as in defence are a striking sign of resolve to address the underlying problems more frankly and boldly than before.

It is, however, one thing to predict a phase of re-grouping and strengthening in Europe's defence identity, and quite another thing to predict what this will mean for the development of US/European relations. Certain aspects of the crisis and its follow-up have underlined beyond doubt that there are security values and priorities which all Europeans share, in contrast and potentially in opposition to the United States. Even those Europeans who operated most closely with the US in Afghanistan and Iraq continued to take steps during and after the crisis designed to make sure that they would have other options and capacities to operate in pursuit of distinctly European interests. At the same time, as noted in the earlier comparison with Russia, Europe feels the same pressure as all strategic actors do at present to avoid seriously antagonizing, or throwing away, its remaining hopes of influencing the US super-power. The more serious the EU becomes as a power-player, the more its practical understanding of power will grow and the closer its own practical (if not normative) judgements on how specific security challenges should be handled may draw to those of the US. (There is a hint of a future paradigm in this sense to be found in the converging tactics the EU and US have used to try to force a change in the nuclear development policies of Iran). In terms of the EU's own political dynamics, the events around Iraq showed that it is even harder to unite the whole EU (notably its largest powers) on an extreme anti-US platform than on a pro-US one. And last but not least, certain irreducible shared interests of the two sides of the Atlantic have been freshly highlighted especially by contemplation of what would have happened if post-Saddam Iraq went really wrong. All this together helps explain the current short-term drive to build a concrete agenda for shared or complementary US/European action, for its 'occupational therapy' effect as much as its practical value. In the medium to larger term, one may predict that the European/US strategic relationship will remain an ambiguous, love-hate-love affair for some time yet, with perhaps a gradual tendency to become less sentimental and emotional and to calculate the mutual and respective advantages in any given situation from a clearer starting-point of shared European interests.

## Iraq in its Region

Only a few non-expert and inadequate comments may be added here on the consequences for the greater Middle East and other regions. In Iraq's own region, it may first be noted that (up to August 2003) there has been much less destabilization and potential escalation beyond Iraqi borders than might have been expected, mainly because of the fairly successful containment (so far) of the Kurdish problem.

Secondly, it is becoming clear that the goal of the war which is least likely to succeed – or at least, to succeed quickly – is the creation of a successor regime in Iraq which is both truly democratic and reliably pro-Western: which makes it more unlikely than ever that we shall see a general 'wave of democracy' rolling through the region any time soon.

Thirdly, and by contrast, the fact is gradually sinking in that the end of Saddam Hussein's regime potentially makes a very great difference to the security of his own region as well as to Europe and the US. It means that none of Iraq's neighbours, for the moment at least, need fear aggression, subversion, the promotion of terrorism, or the threat of WMD development and use by the authorities in Baghdad. On the face of it, that should mean an opportunity for others in the region also to lower the level of tension and military preparation and to consider abandoning any moves they have made themselves towards WMD capability. That was certainly part of the hope which guided the US action and which persuaded a number of other powers to support or not actively oppose it. However, there are certain post-conflict scenarios for Iraq which would stand in the way of such stabilization or even create new instability: including the breakdown of order and territorial integrity in Iraq itself; the growth of regional opposition to what might be seen as an alien and hostile successor regime; a decision by the US itself to start hostilities against another regional power (though that seems most unlikely at present); or the intensification of other regional rivalries after the Iraq counterweight is removed. On top of all this come the very high stakes that are being played for in the US's striking and commendable push for a breakthrough in the Israel/Palestinian conflict: removal of both an actual cause and an excuse for regional instability if it works, or a relapse into cynicism and a possible new set of arms races and terrorist initiatives if it fails.

It is very clear that if the international community wants to promote the good scenarios out of this selection and to avoid the bad ones, it will have to follow a carefully considered strategy for the region as a whole as well as Iraq, and harness all useful or potentially useful local influences for the purpose. This does not only mean recognizing the linkage with the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. A ‘region-building’ strategy must have some vision of the future role of Saudi Arabia and Jordan, Syria and Iran which does not merely sort these into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ guys, or into those who will bolster and those who should be undermined by a Western-controlled Iraq. (That would be going back to the days of CENTO and the Shah, hardly an encouraging precedent). It must also include a concept for enforcing arms control and non-proliferation in the wider region which takes account of all – and that means all – destabilizing and undemocratic defence practices and all real or potential WMD capabilities. It is hard to say that such a strategy has been clearly formulated or is being consistently followed by any of the main players so far, but the role now being taken on by the UN for the first time creates conditions in which it might be.

### **In Closing: What Lessons for the World?**

For other regions of the world, a large range of unanswered questions must be raised by this episode: about further ways that the US’s strength might be used, about how they themselves might exploit it or how they might avoid it, about how they should interpret the military-technical lessons of the war, about what this will mean for the global oil market and for the global balance and development of Islam, and so forth. It is a characteristic of this situation, and actually of all such situations, that people who want to “behave badly” – to use simple human language – will be able to find new excuses to do so for at least temporary advantage, but those who are minded to “behave well” will also be able to find reasons to intensify their constructive efforts. Two arguments on the latter side, one more practical and one more conceptual, may be offered in conclusion.

The first observation is the rather obvious one that countries and regions which are peaceful, stable, and obeying international norms are not likely to be attacked by the US. They will also have a better chance of resisting any unreasonable US political (or commercial) pressure, and will be able to help the US much more effectively when

they see fit to do so. Balanced, predictable relations with a single super-power are not easy to achieve, but the best chance of them lies in creating structured partnerships involving mutual obligations and mutual advantage: by adapting old institutions or creating new ones as need be. In short, it is not only in the case of the European Union that the considered lessons of Iraq may point the way towards strengthening local integrated networks, identifying clearer common interests and principles at multilateral level, and working in pragmatic fashion to rebuild the means of collaboration and communication with Washington. It is no coincidence either that, both in Europe and other regions, there has been a resurge of interest in self-regulation of local security challenges including a special focus on conflict prevention. ‘Rogue states’ tend to be attacked not just because they are rogues, but because they are the most isolated and vulnerable. Those who prefer not to tackle them or see them tackled violently carry the onus not just to change their rogue behaviour, but to think of ways of preventing relapse by ensnaring them in benign cooperation for the future.

At a more conceptual level, it would be at the very least over-hasty to declare that recent events have set us on a track towards a unipolar world governed only by the logic of power and dominated by shifting, self-interested coalitions. To claim as much would be to ignore not only the complexities of the US’s own nature and policies (and current hints of re-bound), but the fact that the great majority of other states in the world are now following policies based on respect for those laws and treaties they have signed, the avoidance of excessive force and risk, and the exploration of new forms of regional and international cooperation. The forces of globalization are reinforcing the logic of such behaviour, by making economies more interdependent, making societies more intimately interlinked, making populations more exposed to common threats mostly of a non-military nature, and making the range of problems which can be completely solved by military action (or indeed, by the control of territory) more narrow and clearly defined. Even a country as mighty as the US has to recognize these influences on itself and to moderate its behaviour accordingly in at least some areas, such as trade and financial management and health. Since it is hard to see how the world can now be de-globalized, it is logical to suppose that such influences and constraints will become more important even for the US in future. In that case, we may one day look back on present discourse about the ‘unipolar moment’ and start putting the stress more on the word ‘moment’. We are currently in

a window of historical conditions where US military power can be used with rapid effect and minimal penalty: the fact that this power seems likely to continue growing for a while does not mean that the other conditions creating the window will last equally long.

On this thesis, or at least while this possibility remains open, it would be an unwise as well as an undesirable choice by any other state to cast off the habits of law, cooperation and restraint and to launch itself into an arena of competition defined only by the unbridled use of power. It has just been argued that this behaviour becomes rapidly self-defeating in the presence of a dominant and somewhat trigger-happy developed state. However, even were the opposite scenario to develop and the world become more ‘multi-polar’ as a result of down-turn in US dominance and/or the rise of other strategic and economic powers, it does not follow that ‘bad behaviour’ will be the rational choice for any player whether large or small. In recent political rhetoric, those talking about multi-polarity have often seemed to focus on the desired down-sizing of US might rather than stopping to reflect on what it would mean for the world as a whole. Very roughly, such a pattern of world governance might be visualized in three ways: as a succession of conflicts until one power again rises above the rest (probably a Pyrrhic victory given the existence and likely use of nuclear weapons); as a ‘balance-of-power’ stand-off in 19<sup>th</sup>-century style with competition limited to sub-military dimensions; or as a more positive type of coexistence in which the powers are able to interact productively with each other and make common cause or extend mutual aid against challenges affecting the vital interests of more than one of them. This last is not only the most comfortable but the most plausible scenario considering the world’s actual line of evolution from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It implies that ‘multilateralism’ is not an alternative or rival to ‘multi-polarity’ but, rather, a condition for its proper functioning and its extension over any longer period. A further condition is responsible, non-zero-sum behaviour by a growing majority of states, above all in the security field. The task now is to try to impress these facts both on states who might go the way of Iraq, and on Iraqi’s invaders.



Established in 2000 on the initiative of the Swiss government, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), encourages and supports States and non-State governed institutions in their efforts to strengthen democratic and civilian control of armed and security forces, and promotes international cooperation within this field, initially targeting the Euro-Atlantic regions.

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