

# The European Union Perspective on the Iraq War and the Middle East Peace Process

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During the period 2002 to 2003, the conflict, the war, and the slow path to peace and stability of the post-war situation in Iraq, have had an enormous impact on the international strategies in the Middle East and the Mediterranean region. Without a doubt, the challenge of developing the area into one of peace and shared prosperity, forging a common perception of security and North-South cooperation, or making progress in the Middle East peace process has been made more difficult, given that Iraq and the entire Persian Gulf region are in search of peace and stability.

The Iraqi conflict has put clearly in evidence several key aspects regarding the whole Middle Eastern region. There are some simple equations involved in the Middle East conflict. Without a comprehensive peace settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, the potential for instability in the region and in the wider world will remain, and without an end to the Israeli-Arab conflict, and mutual recognition between the two nations, any peace agreement between Israel and Palestine will continue to face constant obstacles. And last, but by no means least, there will be no peace without the United States. These three elements are necessary to underpin a proactive EU policy. The Iraq war has changed some parameters, but has not removed the need for continued efforts to construct comprehensive peace in the region. Nor has it changed the vision that we Europeans wish our neighbours in the Middle East to adopt and promote.

The Iraq war has not completely transformed the Arab world, nor the Middle East in general, but there have been important consequences. The fall of

Saddam Hussein's regime, for example, has had some strategic impact, as Iraq was a major actor in the Israeli-Arab conflict and wars. In 1991, it fired Scud missiles on Israel, which fortunately were rather ineffective. During that conflict, the Palestinian leadership made a strategic error of not opposing the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and were then forced to pay a heavy price both economically and in human lives for their position. Until a few months ago, Baghdad continued to support some of the rejectionist Palestinian groups.

The military balance and the profile of threat in the region have also changed, as has been acknowledged by Tsahal. For Israel, the traditional risk from the East has all but disappeared. The few remaining Palestinians who view Iraq as the stronghold of Arab nationalism are no more than the orphans of an out-of-date ideology. The Arab world and Israel are now presented with an opportunity to move forward to a situation of comprehensive Peace between them.

Success in seizing that opportunity is not assured, but the chance of peace will be improved if certain conditions can be met.

We must work towards a mature Iraq, run by Iraqis, and with good relations with its neighbours and the means to guarantee its territorial integrity and unity. These objectives are clear, and endorsed by the whole international community in UN Security Council Resolution 1483. But at this stage there still exists no clear roadmap for Iraq.

Beyond the Arab world, the disappearance of the Baath regime has changed the strategic environment for Iran, and for the situation in Tehran we have both concerns and hopes: The nuclear programme has raised questions; we expect Iran to establish an enhanced and full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); and we think that Tehran could and should be more coop-

## THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND IRAQ (June 2002-June 2003)

### **Copenhagen European Council - Presidency Conclusions**

**(12/13-12-02).** Full and unequivocal support for Resolution 1441 of the Security Council. Full support for the United Nations and for the inspection operations of the UNMOVIC and the IAEA.

[http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/73842.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/73842.pdf)  
15917/02

### **Brussels Extraordinary European Council - Presidency Conclusions**

**(17-02-03).** Full support for the Security Council and Resolution 1441 for dealing with Iraqi disarmament, and the manifest intention of fulfilling this disarmament peacefully. Call for the Iraqi region to assume responsibility. Commitment to work in coordination with the Arab countries and the League of the Arab States. Commitment to collaboration, especially with the United States, in order to achieve the disarmament of Iraq, and peace and stability in the region.

[http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/74554.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/74554.pdf)  
6466/03

### **Brussels European Council - Presidency Conclusions**

**(20/21-03-03).** Commitment to the territorial integrity, sovereignty, political stability and the full disarmament of Iraq. Respect for the rights of the Iraqi people, including the minority populations. Urgent necessity to deal with the principal humanitarian needs caused by the conflict, and support for such needs through the programme «Oil-for-Food». Resolution to contribute to the establishment of a representative government. Aid for the countries facing the consequences, such as the flows of refugees, of the conflict. Commitment to the peace process

in the Middle East. Commitment to the fundamental role of the United Nations. Resolution to continue the transatlantic dialogue.

[http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/75136.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/75136.pdf)  
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### **Presidency's Statement on Iraq. Athens (16-04-03).**

Held, with the presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in order to debate measures to be adopted. Responsibility on behalf of the coalition in the supply of humanitarian help and in the protection of cultural and museum heritage. The UN must play a central role in the process towards the self-government of the Iraqi people, with the support of the neighbouring countries and with the commitment of the EU in the political and economic reconstruction of the country. The participation of the international financial institutions in the aforementioned process is welcomed.

[http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/75510.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/75510.pdf)

### **Thessaloniki European Council - Presidency Conclusions**

**(19/20-06-03).** Welcomes the adoption of Resolution 1483 of the Security Council, the basis for the initial stages of political transition in Iraq. Expression of the wish that the United Nations contribute to the formation of a representative Iraqi government.

Willingness to participate in the reconstruction of Iraq in accordance with Resolution 1483, and to continue an active participation in the field of humanitarian aid.

Resolution to promote dialogue and cooperation with the Arab and Islamic world.

[http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/76279.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/76279.pdf)  
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erative on the Middle-East peace process. As a high-level Iranian official commented to me, there is no reason for the Iranians to be more Palestinian than the Palestinians.

The window of opportunity for the restoration of a peace process between the Israelis and Palestinians should not be lost. The latest Iraqi crisis cast a temporary shadow on the main crisis in the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but while the ministries and the media were taken up in dealing with Iraq, the EU once again continued its support of the need for a peace initiative. From summer until December 2002, the Quartet discussed what is now known as the Road Map. It was officially endorsed by Washington, and presented to the parties before the end of the military operations in Iraq. Since then, we have seen an unprecedented effort by the current US Administration, with the full support of the other members of the Quartet. Nobody underestimates the difficulties involved in such a process, but this is a real attempt to change the patterns of confrontation and return to genuine cooperation and negotiation. No effort should be spared for work in that direction.

The European Union, which has kept the Palesti-

nian Authority up and running with its financial and political support, stands ready to help the Palestinians reassert their position as the partners of Israel, in order to finalise the creation of a viable State of Palestine. The EU is also prepared to engage with Israel in a deeper and broader dialogue. During the last European Council in Thessaloniki, I presented to European leaders an analysis of the challenges we Europeans face, including those of terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction. These are issues that we still need to discuss more effectively with Israel and the Arab world.

Peace in the Middle East will not be comprehensive and stable if the Syrian and the Lebanese issues, as mentioned in the Road Map, are not addressed. In Damascus, there are signs that an overall strategic reassessment is taking place following the fall of Saddam Hussein. Lebanon will be a key partner in any Israeli-Palestinian deal, as it hosts a large Palestinian refugee community. During the coming months and years, we should try to think ahead and to see how the paths to peace clearly mentioned in the Road Map can be transformed into action.

As Europeans, we should also engage the whole region in a revitalised and comprehensive partner-

## THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND IRAQ

**Resolution of the European Parliament on the situation in Iraq (31-01-03).** Commitment to peace, democracy and respect for human rights and International Law. Need for the application of the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. Support for the task of the UNMOVIC and the IAEA.

The violations of Resolution 1441 do not justify any recourse to military action. Requests that the government of Iraq fulfil Resolution 1441. Urges the Council of the European Union to attempt to establish a common position on Iraq within the framework of the CFSP. Opposes any unilateral military action and considers that a preventive attack would not be in accordance with International Law or the United Nations Charter; for this reason it asks for an exploration of all political and diplomatic channels. Commitment to sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Iraq, Kuwait and the neighbouring countries.

[http://www.europarl.eu.int/plenary/default\\_es.htm#adop](http://www.europarl.eu.int/plenary/default_es.htm#adop)

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**Recommendation of the European Parliament on the situation in Iraq, addressed to the Council (2003/2178(INI)) (17-09-03).** Recommends that the Council adopt a common position for the EU in which the need for promoting the stability and the reconstruction in Iraq is specified.

Recommends that the Council acknowledge that the International Donors Conference, planned for 23rd and 24th October 2003 in Madrid, must have a clear framework agreed by the international community. Requests that the Council, bearing in mind the future responsibilities of the EU and especially concerning the reconstruction of Iraq, appoint a special representative of the EU for the aforementioned country. Recommends that the Council monitor this common position with use of necessary actions within the field of the CFSP.

[http://www.europarl.eu.int/plenary/default\\_en.htm#adop](http://www.europarl.eu.int/plenary/default_en.htm#adop)

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ship. Unlocking the full potential of the Barcelona process requires a situation of peace in the Middle East, but it is still an instrument that can actively support the principle of regional cooperation. We need to see mutual recognition in the whole region, and for this reason we continue to view the results of the Arab League Summit in Beyrouth as an offer that should be explored.

The European Union is determined to remain en-

gaged on all fronts: the Iraqi, the Iranian, the Palestinian-Israeli and the Arab-Israeli fronts, and cooperation with Washington has been established on all these issues. Building coalitions for peace is presently top of the agenda, as something to be achieved at all levels: for states, international organisations, and the civil societies whose involvement will be one of the keys to maintaining the hopes that we are trying to create.

## DOCUMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**COM (2002) 296/F (07-06-02).** Proposal for a Council Regulation by which the Regulation (EC) No 2465/96 is modified in relation to the interruption of the economic and financial relations between the European Community and Iraq. (Submitted by the Commission)

[http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2002/com2002\\_0296en01.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2002/com2002_0296en01.pdf)

**COM (2003) 214/F (28-04-03).** Proposal for a Council Regulation by which the Regulation (EC) No 2465/1996 of the Council is modified for the third time, in relation to the interruption of the economic and fi-

nancial relations between the European Community and Iraq. (Submitted by the Commission)

[http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2003/com2003\\_0214en01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2003/com2003_0214en01.pdf)

**COM (2003) 357/F (10-06-03).** Proposal for a Council Regulation concerning certain concrete restrictions applicable to the economic and financial relations with Iraq, and by which the Regulation (EC) No 2465/1996 of the Council is revoked. (Submitted by the Commission)

[http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2003/com2003\\_0357en01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2003/com2003_0357en01.pdf)