

FEIGNED AND TRUE REASONS FOR THE WAR OF AGGRESSION AGAINST SADDAM HUSSAIN'S IRAQ

Recent statements by American officials have refuelled the discussion as to what were the true reasons driving the United States to start a war against Saddam Hussain's regime in Iraq. For months on end the US has tried to convince the world of the idea that there was no other option than to go to war, since the Iraqi regime presumably possessed weapons of mass destruction, and since effective 'disarmament' could only be achieved via a war. More than six weeks have passed since the bloody war waged against the world's public opinion, came to an end. Yet in spite of feverish efforts undertaken by a huge American team of weapons' inspectors, no nuclear, chemical or biological weapons have been unearthed. In consequence, the US government is under pressure, from the US press and from members of Congress, to clarify the matter. Minister of defense Donald Rumsfeld has speculated that Saddam Hussain may have disposed of his weapons of mass destruction right before the war began. The Pentagon's second highest-ranking official Paul Wolfowitz, however, has made the startling revelation that the argument regarding Iraq's disarmament was only used for bureaucratic reasons, because it would be most acceptable to the public.... (1). Time to review the feigned and the true reasons for the war against Iraq.

1.

Let's, to start, look back at the period preceding the war, when the controversy raging inside the UN Security Council was centred on the question of presumed violations of UN-resolutions by Saddam Hussain's regime. Being the principal proponent of war, the US constantly hammered on the point that violations of UN-resolutions could not be tolerated, since such would undermine the credibility of the United Nations, and would weaken the international system of law. The very first conclusion in any review of the prehistory of the war on Iraq should, in my view, be that the United States itself did everything to undermine beforehand the credibility of the UN-inspection regime put in place to ensure implementation of UN-resolutions. Several months before the UN resumed its inspections to check on the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the American President Bush in a speech held on June the 2nd, 2002, had claimed the US's right to stage a '*preventive war*'. According to this new military doctrine the US not only is entitled to defend itself against an attack by a foreign power. It not only has the right to attack any country seeking to overwhelm it. No, according to the '*preventive war*'-doctrine the world's only hyperpower has the right to attack any state posing a potential threat to its own interests.

Now, the doctrine has never figured as the main topic of a debate in the UN Security Council during the long months when the controversy over the Council's policy with regard to Iraq continued to rage. Still, a debate by the Council's members on the juridical implications of the doctrine would have been very appropriate. Sixteen leading British and European professors of international law early March wrote a letter to the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, in which they argued with force that the new doctrine is

illegal under existing international law. The UN Charter simply does not offer any grounds for launching a war on this basis. The well known American legal expert, Richard Falk, in an article published in the French monthly *Le Monde Diplomatique* has similarly pointed out that the doctrine is contrary to the principles laid down in the UN Charter, and that it poses a threat to the international legal system. (2) Ultimately, the whole Security Council discussion regarding the inspections' regime got deadlocked. Though the US frantically tried to win over hesitant Council members, it never was able to obtain a formal approval for its the war of aggression. Yet should not the US's new military doctrine, which like a sword of Damocles continues to haunt any government harboring criticisms of the US, long since have become the focus of a separate debate in the Security Council?

2.

Let's dwell some more on the *feigned* reasons for the war, before addressing its true reasons. In the debate regarding Iraq's presumed possession of weapons of mass destruction, two questions figured primarily: how reliable was the evidence cited as proof by the US and its chief accomplice Great Britain? And: did the US really believe that Iraq posed a military threat to the world, or did other ponderous motives drive the US towards war? As to the first question - the very most striking is that leaders of the UN-inspection team just before the launching of the war outright rejected the argumentation which the American Secretary of State Powell in his speech to the Security Council early February had put forward to prove Iraq's presumed possession of *atomic* weapons. On March the 7th, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Al-Baradei, stated his views on three key points in Powell's argumentation. He argued that it were highly unlikely that the aluminium tubes which Iraq had reportedly imported, were destined for nuclear enrichment. The magnets which Saddam's government possessed were meant to be used for guidance of missiles; they were not targeted for use in nuclear enrichment either. And rumors suggesting that Iraq had imported uranium from the African country of Niger in Al-Baradei's view were not based on authentic facts, but instead on *falsified* documents.

The head of the former UN-inspection team, Hans Blix, after the war's end has repeated accusations that Western intelligence services have deceived the public. And whereas Iraq now suffers under a foreign occupation, a discussion has erupted in the US not just about the question as to whether the evidence to proof that Iraq was out to produce *nuclear* weapons was consciously faked, but about the question as to whether Iraq in the months before the start of the war held any weapons of mass destruction at all. Several of Iraq's top scientists who have worked for Saddam Hussain have meanwhile surrendered to the occupation forces. None appears to have put the US or Great Britain on the track of any secret stocks. Amer Al-Saadi, Saddam's chief scientific advisor, reportedly has declared that no weapons of mass destruction will be found. And though it is conceivable that some traces of chemical or biological weapons will be discovered, Northern-based politicians and journalists are ready to conclude that the US and Great Britain have *bluffed*. According to Jane Harman, Democratic member of the US House of Representatives, 'this could conceivably be the biggest intelligence hoax of all times'. *Le Monde*, in its editorial comment dated May 30, terms the matter 'undoubtedly the very biggest lie-of-state in recent years' (3).

3.

The scandal surrounding the official reasons for going to war, however, is much larger than is exposed by an isolated discussion about Saddam's presumed possession of weapons of mass destruction alone. Once more - as in the case of the discussion on the violations of UN-decisions - the discussion should long since have been shifted towards that on dangerous policy-trends in the US itself. After the end of the Cold War, the US, just like Russia, has dismantled a part of its stock of strategic nuclear weapons. Yet by now the policy of phasing out 'overkill' clearly belongs to the past. In the Pentagon's deliberations regarding the budget for 2004, the American Senate has recently decided to lift the ban previously in force, under the *Spratt-Furse Amendment*. This amendment dating from 1993 prohibited research into, or the development of, nuclear weapons with an explosive power of less than 5 kiloton. The Senate's lifting of the ban under the given amendment is reported to pave the way for research into three types of small nuclear weapons, i.e.: nuclear bombs with a limited explosive potential, nuclear bunker busters which dive deep into the earth before exploding, and nuclear weapons to be deployed against stocks of biological and chemical weaponry (4).

In different wars which the US has waged since the beginning of the nineties, the hyperpower has not shrunk back from the use of ammunition containing depleted uranium. During the third Gulf war such ammunition appears to have been employed too. The risks to the health of people living in war-infected areas, and to American soldiers, have been pinpointed many times. The Senate's present decision, however, potentially has far more dramatic implications than has the use of depleted uranium. Under the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), nuclear weapons' states made a commitment to strive towards nuclear disarmament, in exchange for the commitment made by non-nuclear states not to develop their own nuclear arms. They are also beholden not to employ nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear state. In consequence of the lifting of the ban expressed in the *Spratt-Furse amendment*, there not only exists a real danger that US weapons' laboratories resume research into atomic weaponry. There is the added risk that new atomic weapons be used against non-nuclear states. The list in the Pentagon's 2002 *Nuclear Posture Review*, of states against which the US considers the use of tactical nuclear weapons as justified, includes several non-nuclear states. (5) And what is perhaps most alarming: US officials have speculated publicly that the US may employ nuclear weapons in the context of a 'preventive' war.

4.

In a previous essay on the political economy of the US's war plans against Iraq, I had described two major reasons for the planned war: the US's resolve to ensure access to sources of oil at all costs, and the US's temptation to restart the use of military purchases as a means towards business cycle regulation, at a time when the American economy faces a periodic crisis. Facts brought out since the writing of the given essay easily confirm that those two economic interests indeed are amongst the real reasons for the bloodshed. In May, 2001, the national energy policy group led by Vice-president Dick Cheney published a document which propagated that the US strengthen its hold over the Middle East's oil reserves in view of the US's future energy needs. Over the coming two decades, the level of oil production in the US will see a twelve percent fall. Since the US's energy needs will

continue to rise, the country's dependence on imports will grow apace. Cheney's report states things freely and frankly: the region around the Persian Gulf, with two-thirds of the world's proven oil reserves, can best help cover the country's rising demand. And although huge investments are required to facilitate an expansion in Iraq's oil production, this country's reserves – estimated to be the world's second largest - are crucially important to US-imperialism (6).

Doubts as to whether the US's interest in terms of business cycle regulation played a role in the devising of the war plans, too can be dispelled on the basis of facts that have become available more recently. Academics who remain unconvinced of the idea that the US, as in the Reagan period, employs its military allocations towards macro-economic policymaking, refer to the size of the official military budget. Though it has seen a substantial increase since 1998, the military budget continues being a minor percentage of the US's Gross Domestic Product: less than 4 percent. The military allocations, however, also comprise expenditures which are not included in the official budget, since the Pentagon deems those expenditures to be 'exceptional' war expenditures. Yet the most significant point is this: a part of the new and unreported military expenditures serves to promote accumulation in the civilian and military sectors where information-technology is being produced. These were precisely the sectors which, along with the sector where means of production towards information technology are manufactured, figured as the motor of the business cycle of the 1990s. In an article published in March last, *Le Monde* has offered an overview indicating what significance is held by the Pentagon's newest expenditures for companies based in Silicon Valley. Thus, government orders placed with IBM increased by 25 percent; Silicon Graphic's sales to the Pentagon in a year's time had risen from 20 to 35 percent of its total sales (7). And although governmental orders constitute only a minor proportion of the production of information technology as a whole, they surely have contributed towards a limited resurgence of production in the mentioned economic sectors.

5.

The question then is not whether oil- and arms' production were motives driving the US to war, but rather whether there were further self-interests that pushed the US into launching the highly unpopular war. The answer to this question is an unconditional 'yes'. On the eve of, and in the course of, the war several articles have appeared on internet and in the press detailing the mutual relationship between the oil- and the dollar-issue. The current account deficit on the US's balance of payments has increased more than tenfold since the years of Reagan's rule, - from some 45 Billion US dollars in the early eighties to over 500 Billion dollars today. Whereas any other government would have to wreck its brain over how to cover the gap, the US so far can get away without clearing its mess. Because the dollar is the main means of payments in the international economy, the US is able to cover its trade deficits simply by printing more dollar notes. Yet this situation can only last as long as countries exporting to the US agree to accept American dollars. Four years back the regime of Saddam Hussain decided to switch to the *Euro*. It started demanding payment of the bill for its oil-exports in Europe's common currency, - a decision unbearable to US imperialism. Imagine the effect that would be engendered if a growing number of oil-exporting countries decided to do the same. The American government would soon be cornered, and the US would no longer be able to draw on hidden subsidies from the rest of the world.

The necessity of war thus is also rooted in the irresponsible policy which the US has pursued since the eighties with regard to its trade deficit. Yet the vulnerability of the US economy has other dimensions. While facing a monstrously large current account deficit, the US is also dependent on foreign sources for the financing of its public debt. In the Reagan period the government used to push up interest rates in order to encourage investments by foreign capital holders in US state bonds. This policy was consequential in terms of the US's international financial position. Whereas the US had been a creditor nation ever since World War One, the 'superpower' by 1984/1985 was being transformed into a debtor country, witnessing an annually growing foreign debt. And although the US during the nineties has tried to prevent a further escalation of its external indebtedness, the debt problem has never been solved. According to Frederic Clairmonte, foreign financiers at the present hold a 42 percent of all the US's state bonds (9). Moreover, a major part of the money furnished by foreign financiers has been invested in *short-term* state-loans, i.e. in loans that can be sold at short notice. In other words, there exists the real danger of a second abandonment, in addition to the risk that oil-producing countries abandon the Dollar. This time the 'desertion' would be staged by foreign lenders who suddenly decide to get rid of American state bonds. In short, the US also went to war in view of its economic *vulnerability*, and in order to suppress implied criticisms of its irresponsible trade-policy.

6.

Let me lastly comment on the outcome of the recent war, i.e. the occupation of Iraq by a combined invasion force of the US and Great Britain. Here I need to refer once more to the *feigned* reasons for the use of imperial violence. Neoconservative members of the US governments, when preparing for war, have loudly proclaimed that violence would serve to '*democratise*' the Middle Eastern region. Since in the past the US has often been in league with dictatorial regimes in the Middle East and elsewhere, including with Saddam Hussain's regime, these pronouncements have naturally been received with scorn. Further, any idea that the US might be committed to the democratization of Iraq is contradicted by facts regarding the growing distance between the US on the one hand, and different Iraqi political forces on the other. In the months before the launching of the invasion, an increasingly large number of Iraqi resistance groups stated their *opposition* against the US's plans to attack Iraq. When the costs of Iraq's 'reconstruction' were being discussed in the US in February/March last, the US turned out to be planning a full scale occupation of Iraq by American armed forces. The costs of occupation were projected to gobble up as much as three-quarters of the budget to be reserved for Iraq's 'reconstruction'. Today, American and British troops have been stationed throughout Iraq, and there is no sign that they plan an early withdrawal from the country. Instead of by elected Iraqi people's representatives, the country is being run by Americans.

The best proof that self-interest constituted the principal American motive for the launching of war is offered by the manner in which decision making regarding vital economic issues has been shaped. The first steps towards the colonization of Iraq's oil reserves were taken in course of the invasion, when American and British troops prioritized the occupation of Iraq's oil wells. Meanwhile, a new regime for the control over Iraq's oil wealth has been instituted. The US has clearly made sure that it will itself control the access to Iraq's oil and oil income in the future. All incomes from the production and

exports of oil are to be deposited in a fund under Iraq's central bank, which is being run by an American functionary. An Iraqi oil-'minister' has been appointed, but his scope for manoeuvring is assessed as being 'zero' by international oil experts (10). There is, then, no doubt that the Iraqi people for the time being have lost the power over their own natural resources, and that the war over Iraq has led to the imposition of a new form of colonialism. Along with the US's 'preventive war'-doctrine, and along with the lifting of the *Spratt-Furse amendment*, the colonisation of Iraq is yet another excellent reason for continued peace protests against the US's evil designs.

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