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Executive Decisions: How British Intelligence was Hijacked for the Iraq War

By Aisha Dennis & Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed
Edited by Sam Urquhart

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Aisha Dennis and Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed

Edited by Sam Urquhart

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Aisha Dennis is a Research Associate at the IPRD. She has a BA (Hon) in International Relations from the University of Sussex, and is currently studying an MA in International Law at the School of Oriental & African Studies.

Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed is Executive Director of the IPRD. He has a PhD in International Relations from the University of Sussex, and is the author of many books and papers on international security, including *A User's Guide to the Crisis of Civilization: And How to Save It* (London: Pluto, 2010) and *Behind the War on Terror: Western Secret Strategy and the Struggle for Iraq* (London: Clairview, 2003).

Sam Urquhart is an IPRD Research Associate and freelance writer. He has a BA (Hon) in History from the University of Cambridge, and an MA in World History from Birkbeck College, where he is currently reading a PhD in History.

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Introduction

According to British government officials, the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein systematically obstructed and undermined the weapons inspections programmes conducted by the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspections Commission (UNMOVIC), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). It was argued that Iraq's alleged failure and refusal to comply with the weapons inspections and their requirements necessitated the military invasion and occupation of Iraq, commencing in March 2003. Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister at the time, insisted that the war was enacted with the aim of eliminating weapons of mass destruction, upholding the standing of the United Nations and replacing the authoritarian Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein with democratic governance. The 2003 invasion and the United Nations (UN) sanctions regime were justified with the assertion that such policies would destroy the infrastructure that incubated Iraq's weapons programmes, and prevent Saddam Hussein from gaining access to materials and technology that could be used to continue to develop weapons of mass destruction.

The UK pointed to reports to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) by UNSCOM and UNMOVIC, as proof of Iraqi intransigence in relation to the weapons inspection process – among many other sources. This report undertakes an analysis of evidence in the public record of most relevance to understanding this process. The evidence illustrates without doubt that the threat of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction was deliberately exaggerated, and even fabricated to justify a military invasion. By the admission of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) and the British Cabinet, the intelligence suggesting that Iraq retained or had rebuilt weapons capabilities was "poor." The British White Paper entitled *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government*, showed that by 1998 Iraq had been substantially disarmed through UN weapons inspections and monitoring. Yet in 2002, in the absence of evidence of an imminent threat, "an ultimatum… in terms Saddam would reject" was delivered through the UNSC to produce a legal justification for military action that would simultaneously mollify public opinion. Indeed, according to a leaked policy options paper produced by the Cabinet Office, the primary objectives of UK policy were "ensuring energy security" and "preserving peace and stability in the Gulf," a region containing over half of the world's oil, and much of its natural gas.

The picture that emerges from this analysis is disturbing. It demonstrates the fundamental politicisation of British intelligence in the run-up to the 2003 invasion; its subservience to US geostrategic ambitions and assumptions which were rarely questioned at Cabinet-level; and the overarching background of a looming energy crisis which drove the development of a joint US-UK strategy focused on opening up Middle East resources. All these factors interplayed to disfigure Britain's capacity to produce objective intelligence on Iraq, to the extent that political ideology hopelessly impaired the government's understanding of the facts on the ground. All this played an instrumental role in paving the way for the justification of a policy of regime-change which both US and UK planners had often candidly discussed as being pre-eminent over the issue of weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that evidence relevant to the British government's intelligence assessments of Iraq's weapons capabilities was systematically selected and suppressed in accordance with these prior ideologically-constrained policy imperatives.

Focusing primarily on the British response, this report undertakes a chronological and thematic examination of the intelligence available to the British government on Iraq's weapons capabilities from 1991 to 2003. It explores the findings of respective UN weapons inspections organisations – namely UNSCOM and UNMOVIC; the relevant testimonials and statements of leading UN weapons inspectors, as well as other government officials and agencies; and some of the most pertinent revelations on British policy-planning from recently declassified documents. This report aims to gather together in summary form the most significant evidence relevant to understanding how Britain was able to go to war in Iraq on the basis of utterly false claims and beliefs. It is hoped that it can contribute to raising understanding among policymakers and the public of how the integrity of British intelligence can be compromised under the impact of diverse political and geopolitical pressures, and thus contribute toward greater openness and transparency in the conduct of foreign policy.

1. The United Nations Weapons Inspections: 1991-1998

Comprehensive Disarmament

According to UNSCOM's Executive Chairman from 1991 to 1997, Rolf Ekeus, more than 90 percent of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programmes were dismantled in the 6 year period of his tenure. As he later explained: "UNSCOM was highly successful in identifying and eliminating Iraq's prohibited weapons…" [1] Scott Ritter, who was a chief UN weapons inspector from 1991 to 1998, stated that UNSCOM had successfully destroyed over 90 per cent of Iraq's weapons and weapon-making facilities, in the same time frame.[2] This assessment was supported by Ritter's colleague at UNSCOM, former weapons inspector, Raymond Zalinskas, who observed in February 1998 that: "95 per cent of [UNSCOM's] work proceeds unhindered."[3]

There is good reason to believe that UNSCOM managed to effectively eliminate Iraq's chemical and biological weapons. In an interview, Ritter testified that:

> "By 1998, the chemical weapons infrastructure had been completely dismantled or destroyed by UNSCOM or by Iraq in compliance with our mandate. The biological weapons programme was gone, all the major facilities eliminated. The nuclear weapons programme [and t]he long-range ballistic missile programme [were] completely eliminated. If I had to quantify Iraq's threat, I would say zero."[4]

In a detailed explanation in the journal *Arms Control Today*, Ritter further noted that:

> "[F]rom 1994 to 1998, Iraq was subjected to a strenuous program of ongoing monitoring of industrial and research facilities… [which] provided weapons inspectors with detailed insight into the capabilities, both present and future, of Iraq's industrial infrastructure. It allowed UNSCOM to ascertain, with a high level of confidence, that Iraq was not rebuilding its prohibited weapons programs".[5]

Ritter's account has been confirmed by his former colleague, Zalinskas, associate Professor at the Biotechnology Institute, University of Maryland, who affirmed that inspectors had wiped out any possible Iraqi chemical and biological weapons sites as early as 1995. In June of that year, the Executive Chairman of UNSCOM, Richard Butler, submitted a report to the Security Council confirming fulfilment of the inspection's essential requirements in the missile and chemical fields, as well as confirming the destruction of the launchers and missile

engines.[6] Richard Butler's memoirs reveal that in his professional opinion as a senior diplomat, in December 1998 – when Operation Desert Fox was launched – UNSCOM would have required a maximum of two months to resolve outstanding issues in the missile and chemical fields.[7] As Executive Chairman of the new weapons inspection organization, UNMOVIC, Hans Blix later confirmed that UNSCOM had succeeded in not only eliminating Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, but in dismantling the military and technological infrastructure essential to provide the capability to manufacture such weapons.[8]

These authoritative testimonials on the annulment of Iraq's weapons programmes find explicit confirmation in the texts of official UNSCOM documents. With regards to Iraq's chemical weapons programmes, in November 1997, UNSCOM reported that it had achieved:

> "significant progress…Considerable quantities of chemical weapons, their components and chemical weapons-related equipment have been destroyed by Iraq and UNSCOM, in cooperation."[9]

Similarly, Iraq's main biological weapons production facility was destroyed and "rendered harmless" by UNSCOM, as noted by the Security Council Panel on Disarmament in March 1999.[10] Iraq's prohibited missile capabilities were also effectively dismantled. UNSCOM revealed in November 1997 that 817 out of 819 proscribed missiles had been accounted for – in other words, destroyed – in accordance with UNSCOM's mandate.[11] UNSCOM had clarified a month earlier that: "all declared operational missile launchers, both imported and indigenously produced," had been eradicated.[12] The Security Council Panel on Disarmament noted in March 1999, the Commission's conclusion that, "Iraq does not possess a capability to indigenously produce either BADR-2000 missiles or assets known as the 'Supergun'."[13] The *British Government Briefing Papers on Iraq*, upon which the Government's White Paper (known as the "September Dossier") was based, estimated that if the sanctions regime remained in place, it was unlikely that Iraq could produce a missile with a limited range over 1000km much before 2010. It noted that flight tests over 150km are prohibited under relevant UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs), providing a further obstacle to the development of long range missiles.[14]

Further UN reports clearly demonstrate the successful disarmament of Iraqi nuclear weapons capability and related technological infrastructure by the IAEA. A UN Panel established by the Security Council, reported in March 1999 that the IAEA had found: "no

indication that Iraq possesses nuclear weapons or any meaningful amounts…of nuclear material" which could be used in weapons. In addition, the report states that: neither the "facilities" nor the "hardware" necessary to produce nuclear material had been found.[15] In November 1997, UNSCOM concluded that "there are no indications that any weapon-usable nuclear material remains in Iraq and that the ongoing monitoring and verification activities of IAEA have not revealed indicators of the evidence in Iraq of prohibited materials, equipment or activities."[16] Indeed an IAEA report in 1997 prompted an agreement amongst UNSC members that "there were no significant further 'disarmament' matters to clear up in the nuclear dossier."[17] According to Scott Ritter, the infrastructure needed to support a nuclear weapons programme had been eliminated as early as 1995. He asserted that even assuming that some components remained, these would not have been any use to the state, "given the extent to which Iraq's nuclear program was dismantled by the IAEA." [18] Hans Blix, then Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which for six years had overseen the inspections of Iraq's nuclear capability, publicly stated that the organisation was certain that Iraq had "no remaining infrastructure for nuclear weapons production."[19] The aforementioned draft intelligence document, produced by the British government and the JIC, in June 2002, states:

> "After the Gulf War, Iraq's nuclear weapons infrastructure was dismantled by the IAEA… After the lifting of sanctions we assess that Iraq would need at least five years to produce a [nuclear] weapon."[20]

This detail was omitted from the final draft of the 'September Dossier', produced for declassification and dissemination to the world's press.[21] Thus, it seems clear that UNSCOM and the IAEA had succeeded in not only eliminating the vast majority of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, but in dismantling the military and technological infrastructure essential to provide the capability to manufacture such weapons.

This is backed-up by the testimony of insiders from within the Iraqi regime. Of crucial significance, is the authoritative testimony of Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, Gen. Hussein Kamel. The former Iraqi Minister of Military Industry and head of Iraq's weapons programmes defected to Jordan on the night of 7th August 1995, along with his brother Col. Saddam Kamel. Gen. Kamel is best known for exposing Iraq's deceptions about the extent of its pre-1991 Gulf War weapons programs, having provided crates of related documents to UNSCOM. Gen. Kamel's defection was repeatedly characterised by the British and

American governments as evidence of Iraq's weapons programmes and of how defectors such as Kamel are the most reliable source of evidence in this regard.[22] Based on Gen. Kamel's testimony, the British and American governments frequently referred to large quantities of biological and chemical weapons material produced by Iraq before the 1991 Gulf War. However, Gen. Kamel had also informed UN inspectors in 1995 that Iraq had destroyed its entire stockpile of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and banned missiles in 1991, exactly as the Iraqi regime had always claimed.[23]

Gen. Kamel was interviewed on 22nd August 1995 in Amman by the following UN inspection officials: Rolf Ekeus, then Executive Chairman of UNSCOM; Professor Maurizio Zifferero, Deputy Director of the IAEA and then head of the inspections team in Iraq; Nikita Smidovich, then head of UNSCOM's ballistic missile team and Deputy Director for Operations of UNSCOM. In his interview – a complete copy of which was obtained by Dr. Glen Rangawala, currently University Lecturer in Politics at Cambridge University – Gen. Kamel confirmed categorically that: "All weapons - biological, chemical, missile, nuclear were destroyed" (p. 13). When Gen. Kamel was asked whether anthrax weapons and agents had been destroyed, he responded that "nothing remained." The destruction occurred "after visits of inspection teams," which he described as: "very effective in Iraq." Concerning prohibited missiles, Gen. Kamel explained that "All missiles were destroyed" (p.7-8). Regarding VX production, he clarified that Saddam Hussein's regime "put it in bombs during the last days of the Iran-Iraq war. They were not used and the programme was terminated" (p.12). This testimony is all the more extraordinary because of the American and British governments' endorsement of Gen. Kamel's credibility, as well as his open opposition to Saddam Hussein's regime (p.14).[24]

This is not to say that all concerns could have been ruled out. Scott Ritter noted the potential danger posed by VX nerve agent and mustard gas loaded onto 155mm artillery shells, but points out that VX mass-production equipment turned over to UNSCOM in 1996 had never actually been used. He further reports that "numerous inspections" of possible VX storage and production sites had found nothing – he concluded that it was therefore unlikely that Iraq held a "significant stockpile of VX weapons."[25] According to an article by Rangwala, Natheniel Hurd, a consultant on Iraq Policy to the Mennonite United Nations office, and Alistair Millar, Director and Vice President of the Fourth Freedom Forum, an independent research institution specialising in security issues, the possibility that Iraq had retained VX

nerve agent seemed "dubious", noting that "From 1997, UNSCOM repeatedly confirmed Iraq's claim that it had dumped its stock of VX by taking samples from the dump site."[26] Rolf Ekeus maintained that storing BW agents would be problematic for Iraq, asserting that even if the state rebuilt the capacity to produce such weapons, they could only produce such a small amount that storage would be unnecessary.[27] Therefore, while there remained 750 mustard gas artillery shells unaccounted for, Ritter observed that: "A meaningful CW attack using artillery requires thousands of rounds… a few hundred 155mm mustard shells…cannot be viewed as a serious threat."[28]

Charges of Non-Compliance

In assessing the claim that Iraq did not fulfil its obligations to the process of weapons inspections, it is worth further exploring the observations of Scott Ritter. In a sober and extensive overview of the subject published by the authoritative journal of the Washington D.C.-based Arms Control Association, Ritter emphasised that Resolution 687 stipulated that only "100 percent disarmament" could be defined as "compliance". Anything less could qualify as evidence of defiance. UNSCOM's attempts to verify Iraq's complete disarmament were complicated due to the fact that Iraq "undertook a systematic program of 'unilateral destruction', disposing of munitions, components, and production equipment related to all categories of WMD" in the Summer of 1991. In the process, Iraq had disregarded "its obligation to submit a complete declaration of its WMD programs." When this was admitted to UNSCOM, Iraq denied possessing sufficient documentation to prove its comprehensive destruction of its weapons programmes. Thus, UNSCOM could confirm that Iraq had eliminated "significant quantities of weapons and weapons-related material", but the lack of documentation meant that complete disarmament and compliance would not be officially recognised. Consequently, the quantitative mandate established in Resolution 687, meant that Iraq was deemed unable to fulfil its obligations to the process, despite the fact that, by 1998, it had "disarmed to a level unprecedented in modern history," the means of production of WMD had been destroyed and UNSCOM had verified that "Iraq was not reconstituting that capability in any meaningful way."

On 15th December 1998 Richard Butler submitted a 'comprehensive review' to the UNSC, concluding that "Iraq's conduct over the previous month had ensured that 'no progress' was made either in disarmament or in accounting." Yet the body of the report stated that "In

statistical terms, the majority of the inspections of facilities and sites under the ongoing monitoring system were carried out with Iraq's cooperation."[29] Only 5 incidents out of 300 inspection operations were cited as evidence of obstruction.[30] The *Washington Post* reported that US officials assisted in drafting the document, after President Clinton complained upon receiving the initial version that it was "too weak". A senior Western diplomat asserted that the cited instances pointed to the need for greater clarification of the stipulations, rather than to Iraqi intransigence.[31] Nevertheless, inspectors were withdrawn at the behest of the US without UNSC authorisation, and Operation Desert Fox was launched within 24 hours of the report's publication.[32] Additional IAEA and UNSCOM reports testify to Iraq's compliance with weapons inspections between 1991 and 1998. The IAEA reported in December 1998 that Iraq had allowed inspections, interviews with personnel and site visits to ascertain that Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons programme had been eliminated. Iraq had cooperated sufficiently to ensure that the IAEA's work was completed "efficiently and effectively."[33] According to an October 1997 UNSCOM report, "the majority of these inspections were conducted in Iraq without let or hindrance".[34]

The allegation that Iraq consistently refused to cooperate with the inspections process must be analysed within the context of interventions in the inspections process. Hans Blix has argued that the legitimacy and independence of UNSCOM was compromised from its inception, as members of the Security Council were permitted to contribute equipment and state-sponsored staff on a voluntary basis. This "facilitate[d] close 'liaison'" between UNSCOM staff and members of their respective national military and political establishments. As the US provided the majority of staff, UNSCOM came to be seen as "remote-controlled" by the American state.[35] Indeed, Blix described the post of Deputy Executive Chairman as a "direct channel to the authorities in Washington."[36]

The safeguards system under which the IAEA operated ensured that inspectors did not report findings to organisations operating outside the auspices of the UN, as the data collected was considered highly sensitive and confidential.[37] In contrast, the findings of UNSCOM were shared with intelligence officials.[38] It has been widely reported that UNSCOM became a vehicle for intelligence-gathering,[39] collaborating with, having been infiltrated by, intelligence agencies.[40] In his memoirs, Ritter records a meeting between UNSCOM chair Richard Butler, the head of Israeli military intelligence, and the Israeli Ambassador to the UN, in September 1997, shortly after Butler accepted the post.[41] He describes working

alongside CIA operatives, specifically "covert operations specialists" who were experts in organising coups. Ritter deduced that UNSCOM inspection 150 was an instrument with which a CIA-backed coup could be implemented. The US and UK utilised knowledge of Iraqi military bases and presidential movements gained through the process of 'eavesdropping', to define targets in Operation Desert Fox.[42] For some time UNSCOM "communications interceptions…were the responsibility of a team of 'British operatives'" according to Ritter.[43] Coalition officials claimed the process of data-sharing was inevitable. However, as noted by Susan Wright, Research Fellow at the UN Institute for Disarmament Research, "such arguments falsely portray political choices as technical imperatives."[44]

Safeguards prevented the formation of direct relationships between individual member states and IAEA staff, yet the US still sought to influence the IAEA via UNSCOM. In Blix's words: "…we at the IAEA felt that UNSCOM sought to treat the agency as a dog on a leash."[45] It was as if "UNSCOM's 'assist and support' mandate was…replaced by 'insist and control.'"[46] UNSCOM managed IAEA logistics, including recruitment. In addition, it designated sites for IAEA inspections beyond those which Iraq had declared.[47] Blix commented that the IAEA did not find proscribed material on undeclared sites, [48] yet the lack of findings was used to support the allegation of concealment, justifying collaboration with intelligence agencies.

The independence of the UN weapons inspections seems to have been severely compromised, raising questions over the legitimacy of official accounts of Iraqi intransigence between 1991 and 1998. After resigning from his UNSCOM post in protest, Scott Ritter asserted: "Delays, blockages, evacuated buildings – the classic pattern of Iraqi obstruction – all were provoked and carefully catalogued."[49] In contrast to their UNSCOM counterparts,[50] Blix maintains that IAEA inspectors adopted the measured approach of civil servants, deeming their loyalty to lie with the UN alone.[51] Their approach proved to be effective and prior to 1997, Iraq did not launch any complaints about IAEA inspectors.[52] Indeed, until this point the IAEA had reported full co-operation. Given that the US had considerable influence on UNSCOM procedures (many of its staff were American and it was infiltrated by the intelligence agencies of the US and its allies), whereas the IAEA drew its personnel from a broader geographical base and avoided much of the controversy concerning infiltration, a causal link between US influence and disruptions in the weapons inspections process is highly plausible.

2. British Foreign Policy in Iraq: 2002-2003

"Regime Change" through "Large Scale Military Action" via the UN Route

A leaked policy options paper drafted by officials in the Overseas and Defence Secretariat, Cabinet Office, and distributed on 8th March 2002, suggests the development of a British policy of regime change through military action, facilitated by an ultimatum delivered by the UNSC. Recipients of the paper were informed:

> "The only certain means to remove Saddam is to invade and impose a new government… [No legal justification] currently exists. This makes moving quickly to invade legally very difficult. We should therefore consider a staged approach."[53]

Two "policy options" are considered in the paper: "a toughening of the existing containment policy, facilitated by 11 September" and "regime change by military means."[54] Under the heading, "Toughening Containment", a plan is set out to "put real pressure on Saddam…to *lash out*",[55] and "to make clear (*without overtly exposing regime change*) [the] view that Iraq would be better off without Saddam" (emphasis added). A strategy is described as follows:

> "Our aim would be to tell Saddam to admit inspectors or face the risk of military action[56]…If they found significant evidence of WMD, were expelled or, in face of an ultimatum, not re-admitted in the first place… this could provide legal justification for large scale military action."[57]

Thus the policy of containment leads directly to, if not encompasses, regime change via military action. Before detailing the policy option of "Regime Change", the authors note the imperative "to first consider what sort of Iraq we want,"[58] sustaining that "a pro-Western regime" would be installed.[59] The paper concludes firstly that: "The use of overriding force in a ground campaign is the only option." Iraq's "refusal to admit UN weapons inspectors, or their submission and likely frustration," would provide the "justification for military action."[60] Thus the two sections of the paper appear to be two steps of a single policy: the aforementioned "staged approach" to regime-change.

In an email dated the 18th March 2002, Christopher Meyer, British Ambassador to Washington reassured the British Foreign Policy Adviser that at a meeting with US Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, "I stuck closely to the script you used with Condi Rice

last week…I went through the need to wrongfoot Saddam on the inspectors and the UNSCR's." [61] In anticipation of the summit between President Bush and Tony Blair at Crawford, Texas, on 6-7th April 2002, Peter Ricketts, the Political Director of the Foreign Office (FCO) wrote to Jack Straw on 22nd March. He highlighted the Prime Minister's agency in Trans-Atlantic policy formation: "By sharing Bush's broad objective, the Prime Minister can help shape how it is defined, and the approach to achieving it."[62] He added:

> "To get public and Parliamentary support for military operations, we have to be convincing[63]… 'regime change', does not stack up. It sounds like a grudge between Bush and Saddam. Much better, as you have suggested, to *make* the objective ending the threat to the international community from Iraqi WMD…This is at once easier to justify in terms of international law."[64]

Ricketts described renewed inspections as a "win/win" option for President Bush.[65] He shows that British policy was defined by the imperative of public support, resting on the attainment of legality. Differentiating British foreign policy from the established American stance, then convincing Bush of the advantages of the UN route, and therefore actively coordinating policy was identified as a process of political necessity. Thus the apparent divergence of British policy from its American counterpart seems to be somewhat superficial, as their directions converge. Indeed when questioned by Baroness Usha Prashar at the Iraq Inquiry, Tony Blair confirmed that the two leaders had "agreed on both" the "ends" and the "means" at Crawford,[66] and a leaked memorandum confirms that support for a policy of regime change was pledged there.[67]

The memorandum of a meeting on the 23rd July 2002 between key members of the Cabinet, the Prime Minister and the heads of MI6 and the JIC, amongst others, concludes by urging those present to "work on the assumption that the UK would take part in any military action."[68] US General T. Michael Mosely confirmed that by July, British forces were already engaged in a bombing campaign designed to pave the way for military action, by targeting 391 sites in Iraq, including those housing military communications equipment, command centres and radars.[69] A legal justification and sufficient intelligence to convince the UNSC of a serious and imminent threat was still lacking, but Jack Straw made an assurance that in the face of an ultimatum "Saddam would continue to play hardball with the UN," indicating that Iraqi obstruction could be relied upon. Thus it appears that UNSCR 1441 was a "final chance", only in a cosmetic sense, as orchestrated Iraqi intransigence was sure to provide the

legal basis and cement the argument for a pre-ordained invasion. The "UN route" was conceptualised as a public relations tool.

The Role of Intelligence

Neither the UK nor US government publicly presented authentic intelligence or other evidence proving that the Iraqi regime posed a grave and imminent threat in 2002/2003. David Kay, head of the Iraq Survey Group (ISG), which managed inspections in Iraq after the 2003 invasion, concluded that the intelligence was "all wrong."[70] In leaked memoranda produced between March and July 2002, references are repeatedly made to "poor" intelligence,[71] and the "thin" case for war that it presented, embedded in discussions of military options.[72] A week before its release on 24th September 2002, Jonathan Powell, Blair's Chief of Staff asserted that the government's White Paper *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction*, did not suggest that the state was a threat to any foreign nation.[73] The aforementioned policy options paper, of 8th March 2002, stated that the only legal justification for an offensive would depend on "incontrovertible" proof of "large scale activity" indicating that "Iraq was in breach of its obligations regarding WMD and ballistic missiles," under UNSCR 687. It concluded: "Current intelligence is not sufficiently robust to meet this criterion." [74] Yet as previously established, the policy of regime change achieved through "large scale military action," appears to have been confirmed in the Spring of 2002. Therefore, it seems that British policy was not guided by intelligence – rather intelligence appears to have been utilized or "cherry-picked"[75] to post-rationalise pre-determined policy.

It seems that British intelligence was shaped to confirm corresponding data disseminated by the US government. Simultaneously, those responsible for ensuring the co-ordination were aware that American intelligence had been molded to fit policy. A comparative study conducted by Dr. John Prados, a Senior Fellow at George Washington University's National Security Archive, is particularly pertinent. Examination of the draft and final version of the British "September Dossier", and the draft and final version of the paper released by the CIA in the same month, reveals that the presentation of intelligence was coordinated in content and in the timing of its declassification.[76] Perhaps in reference to an early draft of the "September Dossier," Ricketts remarked in the aforementioned correspondence of 22nd March 2002:

> "I am relieved that you decided to postpone the publication of the unclassified document…there is more work to do to ensure that the figures are…consistent with those of the US."[77]

In presenting the findings of the JIC to Cabinet members, and in producing the final draft of the White Paper, Sir John Scarlett, the head of the JIC, received "presentational support [and] advice" from Alistair Campbell, the Prime Minister's Communications Adviser who chaired meetings with the JIC. In his evidence to the Iraq Inquiry, he stated:

> "A process was set out by me…which made clear what the overall structure and contents was going to be… emphasising to everyone within the system that anything that had gone before was redundant and irrelevant."[78]

During a meeting on 23rd July 2002, the head of MI6, Richard Dearlove, informed the Prime Minister, key members of the cabinet, Sir Scarlett and Campbell that US intelligence was "being fixed around the policy" of regime change through military action "justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD."[79]

In correspondence with Tony Blair on 25th March 2002, Straw conceded that: "… there is no credible evidence to link Iraq with [Osama bin Laden] and Al Qaida. Objectively, the threat from Iraq has not worsened as a result of 11th of September."[80] Thus, the "calculus of risk" from which Blair drew his argument at the Iraq Inquiry,[81] seems to be a subjective perception rather than the product of scientific analysis. In response to the Attorney General's concerns regarding the legality of military action, Blair replied: "If the political context were right people would support regime change."[82] Employing the spectre of terrorism as a rhetorical device served to exploit public fear and confusion, generating an appropriate context to garner support for military action.

However, exaggerated or false claims appeared to emanate from British sources as well. The document published and distributed by the office of the British Prime Minister, described as a "British intelligence" dossier, titled *Iraq – Its Infrastructure of Concealment, Deception and Intimidation*, was used by US Secretary of State Colin Powell to make his case for war before the UN, on 5th February 2003. This document was not authored by the JIC. It was produced by a team led by Campbell's young personal assistant, Alison Blackshaw,[83] and published and distributed by the Coalition Information Centre in the Foreign Office.[84] To support his claim that "Iraq today is actively using its considerable intelligence capabilities to hide its

illicit activities," Powell called attention to "the fine paper… which describes in exquisite detail Iraqi deception activities." However, the report plagiarized almost entirely, three separate previously published academic papers, including one "written by a postgraduate student [Ibrahim al-Marashi] who works…in Monterey, California." That piece, published in the *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, primarily described the state of Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War period, and drew heavily from the work of former UN inspector Scott Ritter who opposed Anglo-American military designs on Iraq:

> "So sweeping was the plagiarism that, according to British journalists who reviewed the materials, typographical errors… that appeared in al-Marashi's article were reproduced in the official dossier that was posted on Blair's 10 Downing Street website... In addition to the sections taken from al-Marashi's article, according to the Guardian, 'The content of six more pages (of the dossier) relies heavily on articles by Sean Boyne and Ken Gause that appeared in Jane's Intelligence Review in 1997 and last November. None of these sources are acknowledged.'"

Where possible, language was rendered more definitive, whilst figures were rounded up.[85]

Notoriously, the British White Paper on Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction launched the allegation that Iraq had attempted to purchase uranium oxide from Niger,[86] even though George Tenet, head of the CIA, had advised the British against including the accusation. [87] Prompted by the report, President Bush repeated this claim in his State of the Union address to Congress on 28th January 2003.[88] Iraqi Ambassador to Rome, Wissam al Zahawie, had visited Niger in 1999, a meeting the British had been aware of at the time. In communications with the CIA in 2001, the Italian Military Intelligence Security Service expressed concerns that Iraq had sought uranium oxide from Niger, because it had sourced the material from the North African state in the past. CIA investigations found no basis for the claim. All uranium exported from Niger was transmitted through a French company, the records of which were easily verified.[89] In agreement with independent experts and CIA reports, the IAEA ascertained that the documents which provided the basis for the allegations had been forged.[90] According to the *Washington Post*, the falsified documents appeared to take the form of written correspondence between officials in Niger and Iraqi agents. However, the letters contained "crude errors…including names and titles that did not match up with the individuals who held office at the time they were purportedly written."[91] The Niger government's letterhead had been cut and pasted, and the signature of a "long-retired government official" had been forged.[92] The documents, which were reportedly submitted to the CIA by British

officials, were described by a senior IAEA official as "so bad" that he could "not imagine they came from a serious intelligence agency." The IAEA confirmed the forgery within hours.[93]

IAEA Director-General Mohamed El-Baradei refuted general British claims regarding alleged Iraqi nuclear weapons programmes. Citing investigations by UN and independent experts in centrifuge-manufacturing,[94] El-Baradei noted that aluminium tubes in Iraqi possession were not destined for equipment that could be used to refine uranium for nuclear weapons, as the "September Dossier" had claimed. Investigations found that Iraq planned to employ the aluminium tubes in "the reverse engineering of rockets." This conclusion was supported by previous findings of the US Department of Energy, which had observed that the tubes were the wrong size to be used in the refining process, as well as the US State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research.[95]

UNSCR 1441

UNMOVIC was formed under UNSCR 1284 (1999) in response to the collapse of UNSCOM's legitimacy. Yet prior to the initiation of renewed inspections in 2002, the UK and US sought to reverse or undermine many of the developments that qualified UNMOVIC as an independent and legitimate inspections body. UNSCR 1441(2002), the product of Anglo-American collaboration, drew from a workshop-based study conducted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.[96] This private organisation advocated "coercive inspections." The executive summary of the workshop held in April 2002, asserted that:

> "UNMOVIC is a weak inspection body that needs to be strengthened or replaced. A multilateral *cover* would provide legitimacy and provide international support."[97]

According to Hans Blix, a resultant early draft of UNSCR 1441 attempted to:

- re-establish reciprocal sharing of intelligence and other data between inspectors and member states,
- facilitate the presence of member state representatives on inspection teams,
- establish the presence of member states' armed air and ground forces in Iraq, to enforce transit corridors and no fly/drive zones.[98]

Blix described a proposal that "armed escorts" should accompany inspectors as a "kind of semi-occupation without real power."[99] During the period of negotiation over the content of UNSCR 1441, Colin Powell promised access to greater intelligence on the condition that the CIA was granted a role in UNMOVIC's operations. Blix refused.[100] Condoleeza Rice pressed the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC for a "philosophical agreement on how best" to achieve disarmament.[101] He remained silent, reflecting in his memoir that the loyalty of UNMOVIC lay with the UNSC, and would not be "supplemented with bilateral agreements." Although UNSCR 1441 was considerably tempered by negotiations over its contents, Blix described the final version as a "draconian resolution that would not have been accepted by any state that was not under direct threat..."[102]

Renewed UN Weapons Inspections

The discovery in early 2003 of eleven empty "chemical warheads" and one warhead that required "further evaluation" at the Ukhaider ammunition dump, 75 miles south of Baghdad, was presented as crucial evidence in the case for invasion conveyed by Whitehall and the White House. However, former Executive Chairman of UNSCOM Rolf Ekeus described the discovery as "militarily insignificant."[103] No traces of chemical weapons or chemical agents were found nearby, noted Loren Thompson, a Pentagon consultant at the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Virginia.[104] Moreover, as Scott Ritter confirmed, Iraq had included the munitions in its December 2002 declaration to the UNSC. Therefore, the discovery of the empty vessels, if anything, vindicated the inspections regime.[105]

When UN inspectors visited the home of Iraqi scientist Faleh Hassan Hamza on 18th January 2003, they discovered a 3,000-page document explaining how to produce material for nuclear weapons by enriching uranium using laser technology. British officials claimed the documents were recent "and relate to on-going work taking place in Iraq to develop nuclear weapons."[106] While the documents should have been declared, as Hans Blix noted, "documents are not weapons of mass destruction", nor are they "evidence of a weapon of mass destruction." Indeed, all the documents were produced prior to 1990, and therefore related to long-dead Iraqi weapons programmes that had either been destroyed by Iraq or dismantled by UNSCOM.[107]

The London *Times* reported in February 2002 that: "Key figures in the White House believe that demands on Saddam Hussein to re-admit United Nations weapons inspectors should be set so high that he would fail to meet them unless he provided officials with total freedom."[108] Therefore it appears that the new UN inspections system was calibrated to engineer a war crisis. To that end, for instance, the US demanded that UN inspectors fly Iraqi weapons scientists and their families out of the country to be questioned and offered asylum in the US. Yet when Iraq protested, it was described as an example of Iraqi intransigence by the American administration and the British government, thus building justification for military action.

The US government repeatedly applied pressure on Blix to insist on questioning Iraqi scientists outside the country, a position supported by the UK. Blix suspected that the reason was to provoke a refusal from the Ba'athist regime which would allow the US and UK to pronounce Iraq's non-compliance with relevant UN resolutions.[109] Blix opposed the US proposal, believing it would endanger scientists' extended families who remained in Iraq. He insisted: "We are not going to abduct anyone. The UN is not a defection agency."[110] US officials reported that National Security Adviser Condoleeza Rice arrived to see Blix unannounced and "urged him to underscore Iraq's failures to meet several obligations." Further, "a team of international missile experts," informed Blix that "an ongoing Iraqi missile program violate[d] UN restrictions," as the "Al-Samoud 2 missile exceed[ed] the 90-mile limit imposed by the United Nations by about 25 miles." Yet, this sort of range discrepancy is a technicality with no meaningful military significance, according to Douglas Richardson, weapons expert and editor of *Jane's Missiles and Rockets*. Indeed, Richardson notes that Iraq declared the discrepancy to UN weapons inspectors in March 2002.[111] Mohammed Douri, Iraq's ambassador to the UN, maintained that the missiles had not been "weighted during tests with payload guidance systems" and this had caused the inconsistency.[112]

Contrary to the argument posited by the British government in the run-up to the 2003 invasion, Iraq's cooperation with UNMOVIC was described by Hans Blix as "active, or even proactive." Indeed, citing Blix, the *LA Times* reported: "Iraq has increased its cooperation with inspectors… by allowing spy-plane over flights, offering to let the monitors drill for soil samples at locations where they say chemical and biological weapons were destroyed and allowing a few private interviews with scientists."[113] Moreover, Blix was decidedly

optimistic, concluding that Iraq could be fully disarmed in a matter of months under the UN inspections process. Most significantly, Blix asserted that UN inspectors had been unable to verify British and American claims about hidden Iraqi weapons, asking for further data on suspect sites. Yet, CIA Director George Tenet had already confirmed that all relevant information had been passed on.

There is, in fact, no evidence that between 1998 and 2003, Iraq rebuilt or retained any meaningful capabilities with regards to weapons of mass destruction. In an interview with *Arms Control Today*, Blix was asked: "Is there any indication that Iraq is trying to rearm?" He replied: "No… we have nothing to substantiate that."[114] In the words of former US Secretary of Defense William Cohen to the incoming President Bush on 10th January 2001: "Iraq no longer poses a military threat to its neighbours."[115] In May 2001 the Congressional Research Service – the official body that provides information to the US Congress – conceded that "there is no hard evidence that Iraq is reconstituting banned WMD programs."[116] Citing Hans Blix's concurrent statements in February 2003, Director of the Middle East Project and Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington D.C. Phyllis Bennis, reported that:

> "Blix said the UNMOVIC inspectors have seen 'no evidence' of mobile biological weapons labs, and no evidence of Iraq hiding and moving material used for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) either outside or inside Iraq. Dr. Blix also said there was no evidence of Iraq sending scientists out of the country, of Iraqi intelligence agents posing as scientists, of UNMOVIC conversations being monitored, or of UNMOVIC being penetrated."[117]

In 2003, UNMOVIC was thus already reporting that there was no evidence that Iraq retained stockpiled biological or chemical weapons. Indeed, according to Scott Ritter, unaccounted for stocks of chemical and biological weapons "would no longer be viable" in 2003, as weapons produced before the 1991 Gulf War, would be inactive, having "passed their sell-by date."[118]

Moreover, there was no evidence to suggest that even if Iraq had reconstituted its weapons of mass destruction capability, it could present a real military threat due to such capabilities. In 2002, Robert Gallucci, former Deputy Director of UNSCOM commented that he did not believe that the possession of weapons "in itself", could be defined as a threat to other states in the region, including Israel.[119] Similarly, in an interview published

in *Ha'aretz*, in September 2002, Moshe Ya'alon, the chief of staff of the Israeli Defence Force described Iraq's capabilities as "shallow." Maintaining that he was not losing sleep over a hypothetical attack, he asserted that Israel had "good answers to that threat and the threat itself is limited."[120] The final report of the Stockholm-based Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission noted that as the only state in the region that is not party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Israel possesses:

> "…an unsafeguarded plutonium production reactor…possibly some uranium enrichment capability and various uranium processing facilities…a significant missile programme – offensive and defensive in size and capability [and] long range military aircrafts."[121]

The report also shows that the US deploys far more weapons of mass destruction than any other state.[122] The "standard nuclear warhead used on US Trident submarine-launched ballistic missiles, has a yield of up to 100 kilotons" of TNT, five times that of the Hiroshima bomb.[123] As Condoleeza Rice explained in an article published in the January/February 2000 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, the threat of retaliation is a highly effective method of containment: "if [the Iraqis] do acquire WMD, their weapons will be unusable because any attempt to use them will bring national obliteration."[124] A declassified study produced by the CIA, and requested by Senator Bob Graham in July 2002, thus concluded that the likelihood that Iraq would use weapons of mass destruction in the "foreseeable future," was "very low."[125]

It was argued by many proponents of military invasion in 2003 that chemical weapon production equipment could have easily been distributed throughout Iraq's commercial chemical-related facilities. For example, in a December 2003 address to British troops, Prime Minister Tony Blair contradicted the head of the ISG, David Kay, by continuing to claim that there was "massive evidence of clandestine laboratories" for the production of biological weapons.[126] A similar concern was that Iraq could have been producing such weapons in secret facilities anywhere in the country, with the aid of "mobile biological labs." But according to Ritter, in order to produce chemical or biological weapons, it is necessary to assemble "equipment into a single, integrated facility".[127] Such complex and conspicuous structures would have been easily detected by UNMOVIC or the CIA.[128] UNMOVIC inspectors found no trace of biological weapons in trailers identified as "mobile biological labs" by Colin Powell in his address to the UNSC in February 2003. Instead they found equipment that the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) had previously concluded was used to

launch weather forecasting hydrogen balloons – and which had been sold to Iraq by the British company, Marconi.[129] Indeed the technology utilised in carrying out inspections provided safeguards against concealment. According to Hans Blix:

> "The techniques and tools of inspection developed much in [the period of 1992-1998] not least in the use of environmental sampling, through which even small particles found in installations or equipment or in the air could give conclusions about past presence of nuclear, chemical or biological material."[130]

Ritter noted that although Iraq held hidden documentation with which, in theory, the state could re-develop its weapons capabilities, this would have been impracticable. Given the endemic debilitation of the economy resulting from sanctions, the poor condition of Iraq's state infrastructure and labour force, its financial deficit and high-levels of inflation, Ritter argued that it would have been impossible for the country to rebuild its weapons capabilities to a level representing a threat to foreign nations.[131] The weapons Iraq had constituted by 1991 over a "period of decades" by spending "billions of dollars" could not "under any rational analysis, have been reconstituted since December 1998."[132] The UK government White Paper on Iraq's weapons capabilities estimated that Iraq's illegal revenue reached $3 billion in 2001, alleging that this financed its weapons programme.[133] Yet in 2001, Iraq would have required $65.7 billion to sustain the pre-Gulf War annual average of arms imports.[134] Ritter also pointed to failed attempts to build a legal Al-Samoud missile,[135] and to the dire state of Iraq's armed forces and the Republican Guard, to illustrating Iraq's military poverty.[136]

3. The Energy Context

Iraq is one of the most energy rich countries in the world. According to the National Energy Policy Development Group, the energy task force headed by Dick Cheney while Vice President of the US, Iraq held 11% of the world's proven oil reserves in 2001.[137] The International Energy Administration estimated that Iraq's proven and probable unproven reserves totalled 220 billion barrels. Production costs are amongst the lowest in the world (from $1.20 per barrel in Southern Iraq).[138] In addition, Iraq is incredibly rich in natural gas, and its reserves of approximately 110 trillion cubic feet are "virtually totally unexploited."[139] Additionally, Stephen Pelletiere, a former CIA analyst during the Iran-Iraq war identifies Iraq's water wealth as a central facilitating factor in US "control" of the Middle East.[140]

Documents obtained from the National Energy Policy Development Group by Judicial Watch under the Freedom of Information Act, entitled *Foreign Suitors For Iraqi Oil Field Contracts*,[141] show that international oil companies (IOCs) had successfully sought agreements to develop Iraqi oilfields with the Iraqi government, at a value estimated at $1.1 trillion by the International Energy Agency's *World Energy Outlook 2001*.[142] Russia-based Lukoil and the China-based National Petroleum Company signed active production sharing agreements (PSA's) with Iraq in 1997, through which they were permitted to commence oil-field development.[143] Most of the agreements however, depended on the cessation of the sanctions regime to become active. French companies Elf Aquitaine and Total SA, now part of TotalFinaElf, secured memoranda of understanding to develop fields holding 16-36 billion barrels,[144] and CanOxy and the Malaysian company, Petronas, had also secured significant concessions. As Tony Blair noted at the Iraq Inquiry, a general consensus was emerging in the international community that sanctions should be lifted. However, major British and American oil companies had been excluded from negotiations, although it was reported in 1997 that nine US firms had sought agreements unsuccessfully,[145] perhaps due to their continued support of sanctions and lead roles in enacting Operation Desert Storm.

While Iraq still holds exceptionally rich fossil fuel resources, by 1988 over half of the UK's proven North Sea oil reserves had been depleted.[146] Concerns about the future of North Sea energy industries and reserves were clear from a conference in 2000 at the Institute of

Petroleum. In the keynote speech, Geoffrey Chipperfield, Permanent Secretary of the UK Department of Energy, noted that:

> " … there is a consensus among geologists that future finds will tend to be smaller and more difficult to develop than many developments of the past, a trend which is already evident…Production from the UKCS has been on a declining trend since 1985 and the Department's forecasts suggest a continuing shallow decline."[147]

Chipperfield explained that if further exploration and drilling were to render a positive rate of return amid baseline oil prices which showed no signs of improvement, considerable investment in the research and development of new technologies and marketing would be required. Thus as early as 1988, state and industry officials were aware that further exploration was likely to yield reserves that were smaller and more difficult to access than those drilled in the past. So although the identification of relatively small, yet unproven reserves was expected, the costs of exploitation would be high and industry survival was likely to be "very tough."[148]

Thereafter, the UK energy industry underwent substantial changes, although oil prices remained low until the late 1990s, fluctuating between $8 and $15 per barrel, and then rising sharply to $30 per barrel. Edward Lynck of University College Swansea and a former Research Fellow at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, predicted that economic conditions would incentivise the maximisation of depletion rates of UK reserves. He commented in 1987:

> "… production is peaking at a time when oil prices are falling… for the producer this is an efficient state of affairs…Since there appears to be little prospect of significant increases in the price of crude oil… it is rational for the operators to produce as quickly as possible from existing reserves… [Yet t]he official view that a high level of current production is the most effective way to guarantee long term self-sufficiency is not intuitively appealing."[149]

Indeed, the 1988 budget ensured that royalties would not have to be paid on fields developed in the future[150] and Norman Lamont's 1993 budget further facilitated rapid depletion, by cutting petroleum revenue tax (PRT), and introducing two new forms of taxation to consumers. These alterations made the UK "the world's second cheapest oil-producing region."[151] North Sea oil production subsequently rose by 26 per cent, in 1994.[152] According

to John Mitchell of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the fear of a "permanently effective cartel of exporters…[had] receded,"[153] by 1994 – when he produced *An Oil Agenda for Europe* – arguing that "past policy…to minimise [oil] imports now stands in the way of a flexible and least-cost approach to the newer objectives: improving the economic competitiveness of Europe."[154]

With the development of the European Union (EU), the legal environment pertaining to ecological issues in the EU was changing, pressuring the oil industry to drill more safely and cleanly in the North Sea.[155] An EU *Green Paper* published in 1995 proposed greater regulation of the industry, taxation on energy products for companies, and pressed for fuel diversification, expressing concerns over security of supply.[156] However EU concerns over supply security were matched by those of energy industry professionals. A survey published in 1996, showed that 56 per cent of those interviewed placed "energy security" at the top of their list of priorities of five standard considerations of energy policy.[157] Therefore, it seems that conditions called for the UK to urgently seek energy security outside of the EU.

It is particularly crucial for the UK to ensure energy security given that global oil production is in decline, while demand is rapidly rising. Figures for September 2009, published by *World Oil*, a publication serving the exploration, drilling and production industries, show that 24 out of 39 oil producing states or sub-regions, have seen declines in production since 2007, with the greatest total decline seen in OECD production. The editorial observes that "global supply in 2009 was nearly flat in comparison with September 2008." In the UK, the average production level of 2007 was recorded at 1.66 million barrels per day (mbd), compared to 1.11 mbd in August 2009, suggesting that UK production fell by approximately 0.54 mbd in just two years. Yet its economic rivals, China and the former USSR, have seen production increase by approximately 0.13 mbd and 0.44 mbd respectively, according to equivalent measurements. The IEA's global demand forecast was revised upward by 200,000 [billion barrels per day (bpd)] for 2009 and 350,000 bpd for 2010 (although China is not likely to produce nearly enough oil to sustain its current growth strategies).[158]

Evidence suggests that a key strategic policy objective of military action in Iraq was to secure access to Middle Eastern oil and gas. "Ensuring peace and stability in the Gulf, and ensuring energy security" was defined as the overarching objective of UK policy[159] in the aforementioned leaked policy options paper, published on 8th March 2002 by the Cabinet

Office, which established the viability of large-scale military action.[160] This fit into longstanding recognition that the Gulf region contains over 60 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves,[161] and that, in the words of a UK Ministry of Defense White Paper, *Modern Forces for the Modern World*: "Oil supplies from the Gulf are crucial to the world economy."[162] Contrary to Alistair Campbell's assertion at the Iraq Inquiry that one of two main policy objectives was to uphold the standing of the UN, in fact "maintaining the credibility and authority of the Security Council" was placed last on a list of six "subsidiary objectives."[163]

On 6-7th April 2002, Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Bush established a bilateral initiative – the US-UK Energy Dialogue – at the summit in Crawford, Texas. The stated aim of the Dialogue was to "enhance coordination and cooperation on energy issues." As discussed earlier, trans-Atlantic foreign policy in relation to Iraq appears to have been aligned at the meeting. A report on the Dialogue in the form of a memorandum for the President produced by the US Department of Commerce, shows that Middle Eastern oil particularly from Gulf producers was seen as playing a primary role in meeting forecasted energy needs:

> "Current forecasts for the oil sector put global demand by 2030 at about 120 million barrels per day (mbd)… roughly 45 mbd higher than today… a large proportion of the world's additional demand will likely be met by the Middle East (mainly Middle East Gulf) producers. They hold over half of current proven reserves, exploration costs are the lowest in the world, and production in many fields in the OECD areas is likely to fall…the current installed capacity in the Gulf may need to rise by as much as 52 mbd by 2030."

Nine months later, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw identified "bolstering the security of British and global energy supplies" as one of seven foreign policy objectives.[164]

Following the invasion of Iraq in 2003, British and American officials sought to shape Iraqi energy policy to produce favourable conditions for international oil companies (IOC). In 2004, the Iraqi Ministry of Oil was issued with *A Code of Practice* by the British Foreign Office (FCO),[165] urging Iraqi accommodation of IOCs to secure foreign direct investment (FDI).[166] The guidelines had been authored by Terry Adams, the former head of British Petroleum (BP) Azerbaijan, who had served as one of two oil advisers to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)[167] – a position funded by the British government.[168] The FCO defined "fiscal and regulatory issues" as the remit of its further recommendations to the

Ministry.[169] The International Tax and Investment Centre (ITIC), the directors of which include representatives of major oil companies including Shell and BP,[170] was "advised by officials of the FCO and HM Treasury on their strategy for influencing Iraqi decision-makers."[171] An ITIC document entitled *Petroleum and Iraq's Future: Fiscal Options and Challenges* [172] was formally submitted to the Iraqi Minister of Finance by the British Ambassador to Iraq. It argued for the use of production sharing agreements (PSAs) in the negotiation of new oil contracts.[173]

The advantages of PSAs for IOCs were set out in the policy recommendations of the "Oil and Energy" working group of the US State Department's Future of Iraq Project in April 2003. These include protection from any losses incurred by price drops and legislative developments, as regulation of the oil industry, including taxation, labour laws and environmental protection is effectively removed from state jurisdiction for the period of the PSA, which tends to range from twenty-five to forty years. This also allows "companies to book the reserves into their accounts",[174] simultaneously raising their market value.[175] The *Financial Times* predicted such agreements could produce "windfall" profits for companies such as Royal Dutch/Shell and BP.[176] Greg Muttitt of Platform, an independent organisation which monitors the British oil industry, working with Dr. Ian Rutledge of Sheffield Energy and Resources Information Services, created economic models to forecast those profits. They found that if the average price per barrel is $40, annual rates of return from larger fields could reach 162%, comparing favourably to the industry's minimum target of 12%.[177] It is worth noting that the current price of oil is now much higher per barrel, suggesting that if the methodology is sound, the predicted figures could prove conservative.

Conclusions

This analysis demonstrates that the intelligence failure which allowed British and US officials to justify the invasion of Iraq was not simply a result of bureaucratic incompetence or a lack of accurate intelligence. On the contrary, the totality of the intelligence available to the British government confirmed unequivocally that Saddam Hussein did not possess weapons of mass destruction. Numerous reports by UNSCOM and the IAEA repeatedly confirmed that Iraq had comprehensively disarmed in all fields – nuclear, chemical and biological, to levels that were no longer deemed a threat by 1998. In addition, 90 per cent

of weapons-making facilities had been destroyed in cooperation with weapons inspections. Charges of Iraqi intransigence related purely to Iraq's dealings with UNSCOM, not the IAEA – supporting allegations made by former UNSCOM and IAEA officials that UNSCOM was exploited by the US, for provocation and intelligence-gathering. By March 2003, Hans Blix – head of the new weapons inspection agency UNMOVIC – described Iraqi cooperation as "active, or even proactive", and that Iraq's full disarmament could be confirmed within months under continued inspections. In any case, it was clear that economic limitations would have prevented any prospective efforts to re-constitute weapons capability.

How, then, did this intelligence become translated into a concerted policy of regime-change? The evidence suggests that the British intelligence analysis process had become deeply politicised as a consequence of the Anglo-American special relationship. US strategic priorities were agreed at Prime Ministerial level and communicated to the Cabinet, establishing the policy framework in which discussions about UK foreign policy toward Iraq were conducted. Yet the Cabinet office was also well aware that Iraq posed no threat to its neighbours, and that no legal basis for an invasion existed. Yet regime change through military action was defined as policy at least a year prior to the invasion. By 8th March 2002, it had been decided that *the only* feasible British foreign policy option in Iraq was regime change via military action, in order to "ensure energy security." Without a legal justification, the 'UN Route' was suggested to develop the appearance of one. As Saddam Hussein would "continue to play hardball," the purportedly inevitable failure of this diplomatic process would open the road to war.

Foreign policy shaped the use and abuse of 'poor' intelligence on Iraq's weapons capabilities. Immense political pressure was placed on UK intelligence agencies, and direct efforts were made by Whitehall to control the parameters and priorities of the Joint Intelligence Committee's (JIC) threat assessments of Iraq. As a result, evidence against the weapons of mass destruction hypothesis was consistently underplayed and ignored, while minor anomalies and banal inconsistencies were overwhelmingly interpreted as proving that Saddam was indeed concealing a monumental weapons programme. Most disturbingly, Britain played a critical role in the propagation of false 'intelligence' which seems to have been deliberately fabricated. As the Prime Minister's Director of Communications and Strategy, Alistair Campbell advised the JIC on the content and presentation of the White

Paper, which publicised false claims that Iraq had attempted to buy uranium oxide, and possessed aluminium tubes for use in the refinement of uranium. A paper produced by Campbell's office for use by US Secretary of State Colin Powell also heavily plagiarised outdated sources.

Rather than playing the role of a 'critical friend', the British government in the run-up to the Iraq War did the very opposite, quashing legitimate concerns about the lack of justification for war, and collaborating with the US in developing a politico-legal discourse that could legitimize a policy of regime-change that had been adopted from the outset, knowing full well that it was not fully supported by the available intelligence. This led to an attempt to galvanise the UN Security Council to develop the desired legal justification.

Rather than weapons of mass destruction, the British government's most pressing interests in Iraq, the Persian Gulf and the wider Middle East, were related fundamentally to issues surrounding energy security. In preceding years, the Foreign Office had grown increasingly concerned about the steep decline in British North Sea oil production, and in this context the strategic significance of Persian Gulf oil and gas resources was recognized. Britain's economic rivals China, Russia, and France had lucrative agreements to develop Iraqi oilfields, from which the UK and US had been excluded. Most significantly, this recognition also played a significant role in high-level strategic discussions between the US and UK on energy security at Crawford, Texas, in April 2002 – which clearly overlapped with decisions made to pursue regime-change in Iraq. As foreign policy toward Iraq was co-ordinated, the US-UK Energy Dialogue was established, pinpointing Gulf oil as the key resource to meet forecasted energy demands. A year later, the UK and US invalidated rivals states' exploration agreements with the Ba'athist regime by removing it. As an occupying power, the UK sought to open Iraqi oilfields to British penetration through the promotion of Production Sharing Agreements, amongst other mechanisms. This report thus suggests that British foreign policy in Iraq was disfigured by a range of short-sighted geopolitical, energy and economic interests, which together resulted in the politicisation of British intelligence.

Recommendations

Firstly, it is necessary to re-think the efficacy and structure of the Anglo-American special relationship in its current form. The case of Iraq illustrates a highly one-sided affair in which British strategic priorities were almost automatically subservient to a framework decided at US-level. The British also relied uncritically on US intelligence claims about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, which later turned out to be false. Similarly, the British also repeated its own false claims about Iraqi weapons programmes, which were instrumental in US efforts to justify the drive for war. Therefore, a much more critical engagement with US defence strategy is necessary.

Secondly, Whitehall's capacity to interfere with impunity in the British intelligence system has been unnervingly revealed in the run-up to the Iraq War. Firm institutional mechanisms need to be in place to ensure the complete political independence and integrity of the intelligence services from unwarranted political interference in intelligence processes. Simultaneously, far more powerful oversight mechanisms are necessary to ensure that intelligence services and their conduct can be scrutinized and held to account by Parliament – rather than simply being subject to unilateral interference from Whitehall.

Thirdly, it is clear that overarching decisions over British foreign policy strategy were made with insufficient due process, checks and balances, and democratic accountability. Contrary opinions and concerns were rejected out-of-hand or simply ignored, even when they were overwhelmingly in the majority, and based on clear evidence. This indicates that the decision-making structure of the Foreign Office, as well as for foreign policy at Cabinet level, is deeply undemocratic. In other words, even if particular individuals might be identified as bearing primary responsibility for pushing the Iraq War forward, they were able to do so within an archaic decision-making system which offered no legitimate means to challenge regressive, dangerous and illegal decisions. British foreign policy needs to be democratised.

Fourthly, there is some evidence of a regressive fossil fuel industry role in configuring the way the British foreign policy establishment engages with issues surrounding energy security. Rather than recognizing the necessity of energy independence through a concerted transition to domestic renewable energy systems, British energy security priorities are

selected through the sieve of the most powerful industry lobby groups. This has clearly caused British foreign policy priorities to lean toward diversifying access to traditional oil and gas resources, hence the pre-occupation with the Middle East, where the largest of these can be found. Yet ironically, it is now clear that the Iraq War has neither made us safer, nor contributed significantly to UK energy security. It is therefore essential to break the monopoly of industry lobbies in configuring the discourse around UK energy security.

Fifthly, Tony Blair and several of his former colleagues must be held to account. British intelligence was pressured, and information doctored, to justify a pre-determined policy of regime-change, with the result that Parliament and the electorate were misled. This legitimized a decision to enact a legally-contentious invasion and occupation, facilitating the use of depleted uranium and white phosphorous against civilians, and resulting in the deaths and displacement of millions. By pre-empting the democratic process to push Britain into war, former leaders exceeded their authority. Clearly, for the Iraqis themselves, as well as for the British military families grieving those who died in combat, this is not simply an academic matter. Given that the legality of the actions and decisions of Mr. Blair and his colleagues has not been ascertained, and in the context of their continued refusal to publicly acknowledge both the subversion of due process in the run-up to war and the unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe inflicted on Iraq by the war, we recommend that the Iraq Inquiry call for the case to be brought to the International Criminal Court at The Hague without delay.

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