

United States to Iraq, 17-03-2003

Throughout the 1990s, the US and Iraq had continued to quarrel over the UN inspections of Iraqi's suspected weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs. The Iraqi government led by Saddam Hussein would try and sabotage these inspections in one way or another. This would elicit condemnation and the adoption of another resolution by the UNSC that would typically impose additional sanctions on Iraq. Saddam Hussein would then reluctantly cooperate with the UN weapon inspectors before reneging again on his promises.¹ In December 1998 the US and its ally Great Britain bombed Iraq in a three-day campaign citing as a reason Iraq's failure to live up to the UNSC resolutions.² Between 1999-2002 Iraq did not allow any UN weapon inspections. Then came the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, planned and executed by the terrorist organisation Al Qaeda (whose leadership was based in Afghanistan). Almost 3,000 people died in the attacks. After 9/11, the administration of US president Bush launched the 'war on terror'. Soon senior members of the Bush administration began making the case to broaden the war to state sponsors of terrorism, especially to Iraq.³ Iraq was designated as part of a series of regimes that constituted an 'axis of evil', Bush publicly asserted, which 'by seeking weapons of mass destruction [...] pose a grave and growing danger'.⁴ Working initially with and through the UN, the Bush administration started pressuring Saddam Hussein to allow renewed weapon inspections. Bush issued a thinly veiled threat on 12 September in a speech for the U.N. General Assembly, warning that '...the Security Council Resolutions will be enforced – the just demands of peace and security will be met – or action will be unavoidable. And a regime that has lost its legitimacy will also lose its power.'⁵ In September 2002 Iraq re-admitted weapon inspectors without setting any constraints on their activities. In October 2002 US Congress authorised the use of armed force against Iraq.⁶ In November 2002 the UNSC adopted Resolution 1441 declaring Iraq in material breach of previous resolutions and demanding, amongst other things, that Iraq accept the terms of Resolution 1441 within seven days, offer a full declaration of its WMD programs within 30 days, and allow new weapon inspections to begin in 45 days. The Resolution demanded that 'Iraq cooperate immediately, unconditionally, and actively', warning of 'serious consequences' in case of non-compliance, in which case it reserves the right 'to convene [...] in order to consider the situation'.⁷ Iraq accepted the UNSC resolution on 13 November and submitted its declaration on 7 December. On 19 December the Bush administration declared that Iraq was in material breach because of a number of omissions in its declaration. The Bush administration then stepped up the pressure, with president Bush accusing Saddam Hussein of hiding his nuclear programme and of 'ongoing defiance' in his State of the Union of 2003. Bush

¹ McKay, 'The Coalition and the Coercion of Iraq, 1991-1999 - PhD Dissertation, King's College, London', 139.

² Kenneth Katzman and Congressional Research Service the Library, *CRS Report for Congress: Iraq: Weapons Programs, Compliance, and U.S. Policy: March 26, 2003 - Ib92117* (Bibliogov, 2013), 1–3.

³ Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*, Reprint edition (Hoboken, N.J: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 104, 129–39. Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 1st Edition (Penguin Press HC, The, 2006), 29–45.

⁴ 'George W. Bush, State of the Union Address—January 29, 2002', accessed 4 August 2015, <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/01.29.02.html>.

⁵ 'Statement by President Bush United Nations General Assembly UN Headquarters, New York, 12 September 2002', accessed 4 August 2015, <http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/57/statements/020912usaE.htm>.

⁶ 'Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq', 2 November 2002, <https://web.archive.org/web/20021102072524/http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021002-2.html>.

⁷ 'S/RES/1441', Resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council in 2002, accessed 4 August 2015, <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/2002.shtml>.

warned that 'if Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm, for the safety of our people, and for the peace of the world, we will lead a coalition to disarm him'.⁸ In early February, in an extraordinary session of the UNSC, US Secretary of State Powell presented oncemore the case that Iraq possessed a WMD program and constituted a threat to international peace and security.⁹ Meanwhile in a series of interim reports, the head of the UN weapons inspectors Hans Blix confirmed that Iraq was not fully complying with Resolution 1441 yet, but noted positive developments in Iraqi's stance. Chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency Mohamed El Baradei reported that inspections had not uncovered any evidence of a nuclear programme.¹⁰ The Bush administration considered putting another resolution to vote in the UNSC. The resolution was to contain an ultimatum with a short deadline demanding full cooperation and threatening the use of military force in case of non-compliance. But this plan turned out to be a divisive issue internationally. On one side, Germany and France led the European opposition to the US course of action, considering it to be part of a pre-emptive, and therefore unlawful, use of force doctrine.¹¹ Russia and China were opposed too.¹² On another side, leaders of eight European countries (Spain, Portugal, Italy, Great Britain, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Denmark) signed an open letter expressing support for the US, which was published at the end of January 2003 in the Wall Street Journal.¹³ Back in February, Russia's Foreign Minister Ivanov had observed in response to Powell's presentation that 'the UN [Security Council] Resolution 1441 is based on practical results rather than on time limits.'¹⁴ Now, in early March, during the final negotiations, positions hardened. French Foreign Minister Villepin stated that 'the military agenda must not dictate the calendar of inspections. [...] We cannot accept an ultimatum as the inspectors are reporting cooperation. That would mean war.'¹⁵ China's Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan urged all parties to 'stick to the road of political settlement'.¹⁶ With the resolution thus threatened to be voted down in the UNSC, the Bush administration – together with its allies Great Britain and Spain – decided to bypass the UN.¹⁷ The coalition assembled by the US consisted of a large number of states – thirty in total – although a large number of them were small powers. Only Great Britain, Australia and Poland offered military forces. Various Gulf States offered logistical support. Turkey and Saudi Arabia, however, refused the US the right to launch attacks

⁸ 'CNN.Com - Transcript of State of the Union - Jan. 29, 2003', accessed 4 August 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/01/28/sotu.transcript.8/>.

⁹ Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 159–60.

¹⁰ Daalder and Lindsay, 143. United Nations Security Council, 'United Nations Weapons Inspectors Report to Security Council on Progress in Disarmament of Iraq - Press Release', 7 March 2003, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2003/sc7682.doc.htm>.

¹¹ Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 138, 142–44. For the public debates in France and Germany, see *Leading to the 2003 Iraq War: The Global Media Debate*, First Edition edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), chaps 8 & 9, 129–162.

¹² Andrej Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East: Friend Or Foe?* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 98–100. Jon B. Alterman and John W. Garver, *The Vital Triangle: China, the United States, and the Middle East* (CSIS, 2008), 30.

¹³ Jose Maria Aznar et al., 'United We Stand', *Wall Street Journal*, 30 January 2003, sec. Opinion, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1043875685287040744>.

¹⁴ 'Newslines - February 6, 2003', *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, 6 February 2003, sec. Newslines, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1142850.html>.

¹⁵ United Nations News Service Section, 'UN News - Several Security Council Members Call for More Inspections in Iraq', UN News Service Section, 7 March 2003, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=6387#.VcHGLfk8qT8>.

¹⁶ United Nations Security Council, 'United Nations Weapons Inspectors Report to Security Council on Progress in Disarmament of Iraq - Press Release'.

¹⁷ 'Full Text: Azores Press Conference', *The Guardian*, 17 March 2003, sec. World news, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/mar/17/iraq.politics2>. 'Portugal Will Not Declare War on Iraq', accessed 17 August 2015, <https://euobserver.com/news/10627>.

from bases on their soil, while the Arab League openly condemned an attack on Iraq.¹⁸ No country offered military support to Iraq. On 17 March, Bush, in a televised address issued the following ultimatum:

Recognizing the threat to our country, the United States Congress voted overwhelmingly last year to support the use of force against Iraq. America tried to work with the United Nations to address this threat because we wanted to resolve the issue peacefully. [...] Under Resolutions 678 and 687 -- both still in effect -- the United States and our allies are authorized to use force in ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. This is not a question of authority, it is a question of will. [...] Last September, I went to the U.N. General Assembly and urged the nations of the world to unite and bring an end to this danger. On November 8th, the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1441, finding Iraq in material breach of its obligations, and vowing serious consequences if Iraq did not fully and immediately disarm. Today, no nation can possibly claim that Iraq has disarmed. And it will not disarm so long as Saddam Hussein holds power. For the last four-and-a-half months, the United States and our allies have worked within the Security Council to enforce that Council's long-standing demands. [...] The United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we will rise to ours. In recent days, some governments in the Middle East have been doing their part. They have delivered public and private messages urging the dictator to leave Iraq, so that disarmament can proceed peacefully. He has thus far refused. All the decades of deceit and cruelty have now reached an end. Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours. Their refusal to do so will result in military conflict, commenced at a time of our choosing. For their own safety, all foreign nationals -- including journalists and inspectors -- should leave Iraq immediately.¹⁹

Saddam, however, did not comply with the ultimatum over the next two days. Instead he appeared on state television in battle dress being quoted as telling his ministers that 'Iraq does not choose its path on the orders of a foreigner and does not choose its leaders according to decrees from Washington, London or Tel Aviv, but through the will of the great Iraqi people,' and proclaiming that 'this battle will be the last war for Iraq for a while against any arrogant [power] and the last aggressive war launched by America against the world for a while.'²⁰ Two days later (19 March in the US, already 20 March in Iraq), the US commenced Operation Iraqi Freedom with aerial attacks on a facility where Saddam Hussein was wrongly believed to be present. The next day, the ground invasion began when a total of 145,000 forces confronted over 400,000 Iraqi forces.²¹ With overwhelming technological superiority, US coalition forces were able to quickly overrun the country and march on Baghdad. In the process it inflicted crushing blows on those factions of the Iraqi military that decided to stay and fight rather than run. On 1 May 2003, President Bush, on the

¹⁸ 'Troops Prepare for Combat; Saddam Dismisses Ultimatum', *The Hour*, 19 March 2003, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1916&dat=20030319&id=vA4hAAAAIABAJ&sjid=7nQFAAAAIBAJ&pg=1992,2317360&hl=en>. Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 147. *Bush's Wars*, Reprint edition (Oxford : New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 127–29. 'S/2003/254 of 6 March 2003', accessed 5 August 2015, <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/66233AE203A6F59385256CE6005694C4>.

¹⁹ 'Online Speech Bank: President George W. Bush - Address to the Nation on Ultimatum To Saddam Hussein 3-17-03', accessed 4 August 2015, <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/wariniraq/gwbushiraq31703.htm>.

²⁰ 'Saddam and Sons Ready to Fight to the End - The Scotsman', accessed 5 August 2015, <http://www.scotsman.com/news/world/saddam-and-sons-ready-to-fight-to-the-end-1-600135>.

²¹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 116–17.

aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, standing beneath a banner reading 'mission accomplished',²² declared that 'major combat operations in Iraq have ended. [...] In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed.'²³ After the invasion Saddam Hussein and his two sons went into hiding. Saddam Hussein's two sons, Uday and Qusay, were killed in a shoot out with US military forces in the summer of 2003.²⁴ Saddam Hussein was captured nine months after the invasion in mid December 2003.²⁵ He was executed by the Iraqi government in December 2006.²⁶ To the surprise of many, no evidence of a WMD programme was found.²⁷ In the years after, Iraq succumbed to a civil war which in the summer of 2016 was still ongoing. While US forces left in December 2011, military advisers numbering in the hundreds, returned in the years after. Between 19 March 2003 and December 2011, the US and its international coalition partners together incurred a total of 4,811 fatalities.²⁸ During this period, there have been approximately 120,000 civilian Iraqi fatalities as a result of the sectarian violence and the counter insurgency campaign, and approximately 70,000 fatalities amongst combatants between 2003 and 2015.²⁹

²² Ricks, 145.

²³ 'CNN.Com - Bush Makes Historic Speech Aboard Warship - May. 1, 2003', accessed 4 August 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/US/05/01/bush.transcript/>.

²⁴ Neil Macfarquhar, 'AFTER THE WAR: IRAQ; Hussein's 2 Sons Dead in Shootout, U.S. Says', *The New York Times*, 23 July 2003, sec. World, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/23/world/after-the-war-iraq-hussein-s-2-sons-dead-in-shootout-us-says.html>.

²⁵ Eric Schmitt, 'The Capture of Hussein: Intelligence: Finding Hussein Took Skill and Plenty of Legwork', *The New York Times*, 16 December 2003, sec. World, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/16/world/capture-hussein-intelligence-finding-hussein-took-skill-plenty-legwork.html>.

²⁶ 'Amid Spasms of Violence, Iraq Is Riveted by Gallows Video; Swift End to Drama - New York Times', accessed 4 August 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/30/world/middleeast/30cnd-hussein.html?_r=0.

²⁷ 'Spies, Lies, and Weapons: What Went Wrong - The Atlantic', accessed 4 August 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2004/01/spies-lies-and-weapons-what-went-wrong/302878/>. Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound*, 161–68.

²⁸ 'ICasualties | Operation Iraqi Freedom | Iraq', accessed 4 August 2015, <http://icasualties.org/Iraq/Index.aspx>.

²⁹ 'Iraq Body Count', accessed 4 August 2015, <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/>.