



LE CONSEIL NATIONAL DES  
RELATIONS CANADO -ARABES

**NCCAR**

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON  
CANADA-ARAB RELATIONS

## **POLICY BRIEF**

**Recommendation to the Government of Canada**

### **IRAQ: A Canadian Perspective**

## **Introduction:**

**The National Council on Canada Arab Relations presents its recommendation to the Government of Canada in the hope that it can be used to advance Canadian national interest objectives in the current debate on Iraq. The challenges facing the Government and Canadians in staking a position are tremendous and NCCAR believes that as a nation we should we are obligated to maintain an independent foreign policy based on Canadian values and international position.**

**Canada's contributions to the world are tremendous. Our Prime Ministers, diplomats, Members of Parliament and others have gained us an enviable position in the world due to their ingenuity and skill at resolving conflict for the benefit of mankind.**

**In an effort to help our government take a position in support of our cherished values and for the protection of the multilateral institutions that maintain peace and order. If Canada does not get involved in ensuring the vitality of and prominence of the United Nations from American intransigence the world will loose to extremist right wing ideologues.**

## **Key Recommendations**

- ❑ The Prime Minister of Canada should get involved personally by leading a mission for peace between the Bush and Saddam Hussein
- ❑ Canada should take an active role in promoting solutions to the current crisis in Iraq.
- ❑ Canada should and can devise an exit strategy to relieve the main protagonist, the US, from its maximalist position.
- ❑ Canada should advise, demand and lobby the US and British governments to allow the inspectors to do their work without the unnecessary and debilitating pressure posed by the threat of war. Inspectors are working under the fear that their work and reports of any insignificant or minor infraction can lead to war.
- ❑ The Canadian Government should implement the recommendations of SCFAIT tabled in March 2000 asking the government to re-open a diplomatic mission, and to end economic sanctions.
- ❑ The Canadian Government should work towards promoting solutions, while urging the US to play a constructive and objective role, that resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which is the most enduring problem in the region today, within the confines of numerous relevant UN resolutions.

## **An anti war perspective**

The current debate in Canada on whether to support a war on Iraq is presenting a serious challenge to international and regional stability and has, at the behest of the United States and Britain, created an unnecessary global crisis.

It is a crisis that has been largely manufactured; Iraq has been isolated for many years and was largely contained while the population struggled under a UN sanctions regime. No major incidents or events vis-à-vis Iraq has occurred in the past four years.

The National Council on Canada Arab Relations (NCCAR) believes that the U.S. is on the brink of waging a war which will be a humanitarian disaster for the people of Iraq, a cause of instability and crisis in a region already wracked by violence, which will contribute to rising discontent among long suffering populations.

Canadians are against this impending war and the Canadian government needs to convey its population's desire to maintain international peace, security and stability, and not join in an adventurous campaign that seeks solutions through conflagrations.

The National Council on Canada Arab Relations (NCCAR) believes that Canada should maintain its Human Security Agenda and international obligations to avoid war on Iraq. As Senator Douglas Roche stated in The Hill Times, a war against Iraq by the United States will far exceed that allowed by Humanitarian Law, in particular because of their strategy aimed at decimating Iraqi infrastructure through the use of massive bombardment techniques is disproportionate.

In the past Canadian diplomats, armed with ingenuity, flexibility and the political support of their government were able to mitigate international conflicts, and bring differing views and opponents to the negotiating table. NCCAR believes that Canada is capable of mitigating current stalemate, can push the US to remain within a multilateral process, by supporting increased and long term inspections and advocating the removal of UN Sanctions which only serve to punish the population.

NCCAR calls on the Canadian Government to sidestep the bellicose rhetoric, and engage the different protagonists in a dialogue to create rapprochement. We call on the Canadian Parliament to recommend a policy of constructive engagement that will not undermine the Security Council and that will provide the Iraqi and US governments with an exit strategy. This policy must reflect the challenges that exist within the region and within the current American foreign policy.

## **Regional Concerns**

A US war against Iraq is guaranteed to cause serious damage, not only to the Iraqi people, but also to the whole Arab World. The political instability in the region will intensify and may contribute to increased extremism, ethnic clashes and cleansing, and simply plunge this volatile region in a serious crisis.

The unrestrained Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territory and the more than decade old sanctions on Iraq are constant reminders to all people in the region of the hypocrisy of US policy in the area, which we are at the heart of the conflict between the Arab World and the US. Accordingly, Israeli may commit state terror many times daily and maintain a 35 year old occupation, with the blessing of its U.S. patron. Iraq – which has conformed with the majority of its obligations under UN resolutions - now faces the full measure of the U.S. military forces and probable devastation. It is a wonder that the people of the area and indeed the world are against this hypocrisy and that there is an increasing sense of alienation?

The United States and Britain attack Iraq for possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction – yet it cannot produce these weapons to the world community, even after deploying inspectors and with their sophisticated intelligence gathering mechanisms. Neglected in these discussions are the historical facts that Great Britain (during Mr. Churchill’s tenure as Secretary of War) gassed the Iraqi population during the uprising against British rule, not to mention the use of WMD during the First World War. And of course only the U.S. has used nuclear weapons – and it continually states that it would use Gas/ bio war and/ or Nuclear weapons if necessary. Again this appears as a **double standard, which implies a form of superiority, either based upon power, moral, religious or ethnic superiority.**

The roots of this cataclysm could be found in a study titled, “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm,” a policy paper written for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, mid-1996, under the auspices of an Israeli think tank, the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies. Its authors included Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, and David Wurmser, now all policymakers in or policy advisers to the Bush administration. *One of the main recommendations was the redefinition of Iraq, and the rest of the Middle East.*

Regional instability may stimulate violent ethnic clashes. The territorial integrity of Iraq is threatened and if a so-called ‘friendly government’ is imposed on the people of Iraq, there is a reasonable chance that Iraqis will reject this imposition, which is expected to turn into an occupation. No acceptable Iraqi opposition group has emerged and no tradition of democratic governance has developed. The chances that a civil war will erupt are extremely high. Fearing the splitting up of the country, Iraq’s neighbors have already indicated their willingness to intervene and occupy parts of it in order to undermine the aspirations of the Kurds and the Shiite population. Turkey has stated that its troops are currently occupying areas in Iraq and it intends to move 20,000 troops into Northern Iraq at the outbreak of war.

Governments in the region have legitimate fears that the Shiite populated south may secede and naturally will look towards Iran for support and guidance. Iran is a Shiite country that was engaged in a bloody war with the Arab Gulf, spearheaded by Iraq for more than a decade. The Iranian Revolution of 1979, led by the late Ayatollah Khomeini

called for the overthrow of all ‘corrupt Arab regimes’ in the region, and promised to go after those same regimes.

The geopolitical fears are serious and this particular scenario should be well examined and understood. The Shiite population of the Arab Gulf is considerable in size. Although Arab in their ethnicity and inclination, Shiites in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Bahrain, Kuwait and other Gulf States have been maltreated for centuries. They may wish to express their discontent by siding with a fledgling new Shiite state. Iran, under the current rule of its spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khameni, may take advantage of this conflict by attempting to incite the Shiites of the region. This will further the Iranian revolution ideals, and relieve Iran from the stress it will receive as the second member of the Axis of Evil. Will Iran take advantage of the weakness of its historical enemy Iraq? We believe that this is a plausible scenario for further unrest in the region. However, we believe that the world cannot afford to discover its consequences.

The greatest danger yet is represented by an Israeli role in the war on Iraq and the potential for the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. Already, there is a steady campaign ongoing to make life miserable for the population to facilitate what the Israeli right wing calls “voluntary transfer.” Should such a scenario arise, a third Palestinian refugee crisis would arise which would destabilize the entire region.

On September 29, 2002, Haaretez, a leading Israeli daily, stated, “*Israeli special forces are operating inside western Iraq, pinpointing locations where Iraqi missile launchers might be positioned.*” Israeli involvement in the conflict will raise the breadth and scope of the conflict to engulf the whole region.

An attack on Iraq will increase popular opposition within Arab countries towards government believed to be cooperating with the US. This will cause political instability for some of our strongest Arab allies, including Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Political instability in these countries could quickly escalate into regional crisis of unforeseen proportions and threaten to reorganize the map of the Middle East.

“Just open a map,” said a member of the Kuwaiti royal family in the New York Times. “Afghanistan is in turmoil, the Middle East is in flames, and you want to open a third front in the region? That would truly turn into a war of civilizations.”

### Politics of Morality or Realpolitik ?

Mr. Bush, preaches democracy, but seeks to impose it through an Occupation Army -- which will first have to destroy Iraq’s infrastructure. The Bush Administration’s stated policy is one of **War, Occupation and the exploitation of Iraq’s resources, only after the completion of this strategy will Iraq be returned to its people.** Clearly, the seeds of future conflict are being sown through such a strategy, rather than a supposed foundation for democracy.

The Bush moral argument for going to war with Iraq and parroted by his supporters deserves serious examination. The US government claims that Saddam Hussein is a war criminal, a cruel military despot who has committed genocide against his own people. In 1988, he razed hundreds of villages in northern Iraq and killed thousands of Kurds. However, we also know that that same year the US government provided him with \$500m in subsidies to buy American "farm products". The next year, after he had successfully completed his campaign, the US government doubled its subsidy to \$1bn. It also provided him with high-quality germ seed for anthrax, as well as helicopters and dual-use material that could be used to manufacture chemical and biological weapons.

The US, despite its aggressive public relations campaign has not been able to convince the World that its war on Iraq is based on morality or international law. Project for the New American Century (PNAC), a right wing think tank, conducted a study in which Vice President Dick Cheney, Jeb Bush (President Bush's younger brother), Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld (Defense Secretary), and other rightwing politicians made compelling arguments for a Pax Americana world. The study indicates that it has always been about regime change in Iraq. In addition to occupying Iraq, the report calls for increased military spending and readiness, including domination of space by the US, and for the total control of the Gulf region for its oil and geopolitical significance. What is striking about the study is the catalyst it identifies for achieving the aforementioned objectives:

***The United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.***

The current drive by the Bush Administration is unacceptable to the rest of the world and it is seen as US/UK vs. the world. President Chirac confirmed this when he stated publicly, *"It is not a question of Bush/Blair on one side and Chirac/Schroeder on the other side, it is Bush/Blair on one side and all the others on the other side."*

### **Regime change**

The economic sanctions imposed on Iraq are about regime change and not about weapons of mass destruction. The comprehensive sanctions were designed from the outset to cause serious suffering and pain to the people of Iraq. The enforcers of the sanction hoped that the suffering would lead to regime change. This naïve theory of regime change through sanction is proven invalid when applied to dictatorial regimes. It argues that natural inclination of a starved population is to blame its government. In the case of Iraq, and in particular Saddam Hussein, the people have not and will not blame him for the starvation and suffering they are enduring. Quite the contrary, the Iraqi regime has strengthened during the past twelve years.

## SANCTIONS DO NOT WORK

Sanctions have resulted in an opposite effect. Iraqis today, according to a Toronto-based Iraqi opposition group, blame the US for their suffering. One needs to remember that Iraq, in spite of a decade-long war with Iran did not interrupt its comprehensive and progressive social welfare system. Many Iraqi generations experienced prosperity during the rein of the current regime. Women achieved most of their rights due to the Ba'ath (the ruling party of Iraq) emphasis on the prominence of the role of women in society.

For the suffering Iraqis to believe the argument that War is good for them and will result in their "liberation" is far-fetched and insulting. *Iraq has 10 million children under the age 15 out of population of 22 million. Given these numbers, this is war would be a war on children.*

NCCAR believes that the only path to regime change is through reintegrating the country into the global community of nations. Iraqis are capable, sophisticated, highly educated and live in a wealthy country. They can make their own choices under the right circumstances and not under the fear of hunger and death from disease and war. The only acceptable change must come from within. Historically, many interventions have failed because they were driven by foreign governments and based upon violence. Indeed many of the region's problems can be attributed to the previous rule of the imperial or colonial powers which left these new nation states with undemocratic regimes, ill-defined boundaries after facilitating broader population shifts.

Resolving the problem of the Iraqi government will be achieved through lifting of the sanctions, supporting democratic governance, allowing Iraqis to travel, and above all reintegration of Iraq into the global economic and political community. Than and only then will Iraqis be capable and responsible for deciding their own future. Our obligation is to support their aspirations in all our capacity.

We urge you to recommend a proactive Canadian role that will benefit all. The National Council on Canada-Arab Relations is always available to provide commentary and analysis with the intention that it will help Canada chart an independent foreign policy and help in building bridges of understanding and cooperation with the Arab World.

## Conclusion

After twelve years of sanctions and daily bombing in the illegal no fly zones, Iraqis are demoralized, starved, and have no place to turn. On the one hand a sanctions regime that has killed hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians and on the other a ruthless government focused on survival at all costs. Canada's proposals at the UN are commended, however we fear that possibly they are too little too late. Canada should've led a unique and deliberate track on resolving the Iraqi conflict many years back. However, against all our and other's recommendations chose inaction.

Today the world is faced with a serious challenge that is threatening to undermine world peace and the international order as we know it. Canadian obligation is to lead the world out of this chaos. Leaders in the Arab World and around the world have unambiguously stated their rejection of the war. Canadians along with the people of the world have demonstrated their anti war views. Canada's obligation is to lead and to protect the international system.

NCCAR hopes that this brief will assist and add to Canada's diplomatic efforts at finding and providing a resolution to the conflict. We would be more than happy to provide the Government of Canada with our views in person at their earliest convenience.