

TOWARDS PEACE
IN AND WITH IRAQ

A PROPOSAL

FROM

***TFF* - THE TRANSNATIONAL FOUNDATION**

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Content

Iraq: Three Challenges

From Destructive to Constructive Perspectives

Dialogue – Not a Withdraw-and-Forget Policy

Basic Criteria for a Long-Term Peace Plan

TFF's 10 Point Plan for Peace In and With Iraq

1. The End of Occupation: Withdrawal of Foreign Troops, Mercenaries and Military Bases

2. Return of Iraq's Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity

3. A UN-Led International Peace-Building Mission for Iraq

4. Debt Cancellation

5. International Compensation for Sanctions, Invasion and Occupation

6. Sovereignty Over Oil Resources

7. The Middle East – A Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction

8. A Truth and Reconciliation Process

9. People-to-People Cooperation

10. A Comprehensive Settlement for the Entire Region

A Final Consideration

Iraq: Three Challenges

1. A world-wide consensus is emerging that the invasion and occupation of Iraq have failed to bring normalcy to the country and allow its citizens to live with dignity and basic human rights.
2. Conditions in Iraq are a stark reminder of the urgency of a new and humane approach. What is needed is a forward looking initiative solely concerned with the rebuilding of a nation within the framework of a new Middle East.ⁱ
3. The global community of peoples, the United Nations and its member governments cannot escape the moral, intellectual, political and legal challenges emerging from the Iraq tragedy. At stake, of course, are the welfare and the sovereignty of Iraq. At the same time, however, global security and well being cannot be forgotten.

The world needs to know:

- i) How an Iraq policy as self-serving, uninformed and ill-planned as it has been, was promoted and accepted as a genuine contribution to enhancing human rights, peace and justice in Iraq and how a recurrence of anything similar could be prevented in the future;
- ii) How the occupation can be lifted as soon as possible since it has had a far more destructive than constructive impact;
- iii) What kind of new policies for peace and normalization can be pursued inside Iraq, regionally as well as between the Iraqi people and the occupying nations.

From Destructive to Constructive Perspectives

The basic reason why Iraqis are killing Iraqis today is the occupation. This does not mean that this tragic reality will end when the occupation is lifted. A precondition for normalcy, nevertheless, is the end of foreign occupation. This cannot happen in a void. To just withdraw and offer the Iraqis nothing better after having brought down this unique disaster on their lives and society would be indefensible and irresponsible. Concern for the human

catastrophe is no substitute for a vision on what needs to be done to transform the anti-war debate into a pro-peace initiative once the occupation troops have left Iraq.ⁱⁱ

The politically convenient notion is that Iraq will fall apart should occupation forces leave at this point. The ‘surge’ in pro-occupation arguments witnessed in the media is part of a broader opinion offensive to suggest that there is no viable alternative to the continued presence of the occupation. This is disinformation that must be dismantled.

A better future for Iraq, however, will not only depend on troop withdrawal but on how international cooperation with Iraq and its citizens proceeds when the occupation is ending.

Dialogue – Not a Withdraw-and-Forget Policy

Dialogue as a policy option for Iraq may become more attractive as the quagmire in Afghanistan deepens and the engagement with Iran diverts attention from Iraq. Whatever the case may be, the Iraqi people must be convinced that independence and sovereignty are being returned to the country and willingness on the part of the perpetrators to compensate for harm and damage done is genuine.

The worst and most dangerous policy at this point would be a withdraw-and-forget policy. The invasion and on-going occupation has been a political, intellectual and moral disaster. A withdrawal that leaves Iraq to its own fate without any opportunities for socio-political healing, war reparation and reconstruction assistance would be yet another dangerous approach.ⁱⁱⁱ

Basic Criteria for a Long-Term Peace Plan

i) Re-confirmation of international law and political accountability: all those who prior to the invasion of 2003 and subsequently have contributed to the violation of human rights through dictatorship, sanctions, invasion and occupation and are responsible for the destruction of a nation must not be allowed to remain at large for ever;

- ii) Acceptance that the Iraq crisis can no longer be seen as separate from the wider Middle East crisis;
- iii) Promotion of demilitarization of the Middle East in accordance with previous UN resolutions^{iv};
- iv) Ending foreign military presence in the Middle East as a whole;
- v) Willingness of all parties to the Iraq conflict, including resistance groups, to engage in peaceful conflict resolution;
- vi) Respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq: this must include acceptance of national ownership and control of present and future oil revenue.

An all embracing aspect of any peace plan must be to place Iraqi people at the centre of dialogue and change with an emphasis on respect, dignity, the alleviation of fear and de-traumatization.

Partnership, impartiality and empathy for the decades of suffering, if genuine, will begin the process of convincing Iraqis that international cooperation of this kind is not a return to occupation in disguise. Part of these confidence-building measures will have to be the inclusion of civil society at all levels of peace-building.

TFF's 10 Point Plan for Peace In and With Iraq

1. The End of Occupation through the Withdrawal of Foreign Troops, Mercenaries and Military Bases

Today's presence in Iraq of organized resistance groups is a direct outcome of the 2003 invasion and the subsequent occupation. This applies also to terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda-in-Mesopotamia. The occupation powers have provoked a civil war-like situation by playing

various sectarian and ethnic groups against each other. Present conflicts and violence among Iraqis e.g. between Shia and Sunni Muslims would not have emerged without the occupation and external interference. The conditions created by the occupation have also attracted many kinds of Iraqi and non-Iraqi criminal elements.

As serious as these developments within Iraq may be, testimony of Iraqis from all walks of life reinforces the belief that the withdrawal of foreign troops will lead to a decrease rather than an increase in violence, particularly if a range of parallel measures are taken along with the troop withdrawal.

As the occupation continues, hurt and harm by Iraqis against other Iraqis will also continue. This reality will not end in post-occupation Iraq but will gradually abate. The transition from occupation to a new international mission in support of self-reliance and Iraqi independence will have a mitigating impact on sectarian strife and criminal activities.

The end of occupation has to coincide with the closure of foreign bases, the departure of private foreign military and security contractors and mercenaries as well as a significant scaling down of the size of the US embassy.^v All of these are the physical embodiment of an occupier's presence and its interest in Iraq's energy resources.

The three Gulf wars and the years of occupation have produced country-wide military waste of an enormous magnitude. Unexploded ordnance, mines and most serious of all, depleted uranium and other newly tested lethal weapon materials are present everywhere. The end of the occupation has to be the beginning of a massive country-wide military waste clean-up since it represents a dangerous hazard to the civilian population.

2. The Return and Respect for Iraq's Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity

There are too many simplified perceptions of Iraq. One is that there are basically three neatly discernible groups living in Iraq: the Kurds in the north, the Sunnis in the centre and the Shias in the south. Not only is ethnicity and religious affiliation mixed up in such an assessment, it is also factually incorrect. First of all, the majority of Kurds are Sunni and secondly, Arabs and Kurds have traditionally mingled in most parts of the

country. Before the invasion, Baghdad had about a million Kurdish citizens making it the largest concentration in any urban area in the world.

The ‘three group’ theory has incorrectly led some outsiders to irresponsibly contemplate the division of Iraq into three autonomous, if not totally separate, parts.^{vi} The international contribution to helping and healing Iraq must aim, above all, to help and heal Iraq as one, not as three. Whatever happens in Iraq, it will be for the Iraqis to decide and agree.

3. A UN-Led Peace-Building Mission for Iraq

In Iraq, the wider Middle East and beyond, there exists an intensifying reservation for conventional United Nations approaches to international conflicts because of past experiences with a manipulated UN. United Nations involvement in an Iraqi peace process, therefore, has to desist from carrying out ‘just another UN mission’.

To be convincing as a partner, the United Nations must show an unequivocal disposition for a respectful partnership with the people of Iraq. Additionally, a broad-based UN mission has to link up and synchronize its efforts with the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and possibly the OSCE or an envisaged OSCE/ME and the European Union (EU).

A UN mission has to reflect a totally new approach and way of thinking. It must never be forgotten that dictatorship, economic sanctions, wars and the invasion and occupation have combined to produce a historically unique destruction of the lives, well being and future of the Iraqi people. Undoubtedly, this will be the largest ever UN mission. It must be sufficiently large and structured in ways to achieve results but not so big that Iraqis will feel that it is a new occupation.

The focus of such a UN partnership must be on the ‘softer’ dimensions of the conflict including confidence-building among segments of the Iraqi society and between Iraqis and outsiders. It cannot be ignored that conflict, especially violence, grows out of fear, hatred, pressure for revenge, humiliation, destitution and the belief that legitimate demands are neither heard nor entertained.

It must be stressed once again that all of Iraq's estimated 26 million citizens – including those living in Iraqi Kurdistan under better physical and security conditions – are suffering at a scale never experienced in modern times. Special mention must be made in this context of the estimated 2 million displaced inside the country and the estimated 2.5 million Iraqis who have fled the country.^{vii}

A daunting but unavoidable task for the UN, therefore, will have to be to assist in a complex process of human healing, neighbourhood regeneration, reintegration of returning citizens from abroad, mental health and psychiatric counseling and large-scale trauma treatment - especially for the young - and empowering civil society in general. Iraq, it must be kept in mind, has lost not one but two generations in terms of health, welfare and education and it has lost its large middle class because of dictatorships, wars, the invasion and occupation, killings - including planned assassinations - sanctions and the brain drain.

Empowering the young and giving Iraqi youth speedy access to education within Iraq or abroad, rebuilding past centres of excellence and institutions of education at all levels will be crucial steps towards recreating national self-reliance and national self-confidence.

While the UN and the wider international contribution would focus on people-oriented challenges for recovery, there would also be international involvement in institution-building, physical reconstruction, national toxic and non-toxic waste clean-up, debt settlement and the creation of credit facilities for citizens.

4. Debt Cancellation

45 states have decided to cancel Iraq's debt to them which amounts to some \$140 billion.^{viii} This is a step in the right direction. The confirmation of the actual cancellation should follow speedily. Iraqis are entitled to a fully transparent report on the composition of these debts, the balance of other remaining debts and the legal acts of cancellation. They must be able to understand which debts previous governments incurred and whether debt cancellation has been due to the existence of dubious debts or because of acts of magnanimity.^{ix} The peace plan must involve careful monitoring of the status of the debt cancellation and negotiation process.

5. International Compensation for Sanctions, Invasion and Occupation

Much is known about the horrific costs incurred by the United States for invasion and occupation. There are no estimates of the costs to Iraqi society for the physical, mental, social and cultural destruction the country has incurred, collectively and individually.

The issue here is not about humanitarian or development assistance, it is about war, occupation and sanctions compensation. In 1991, the UN Security Council declared that Iraq was financially liable for the damages caused by its invasion of Kuwait.^x Subsequently, the UN Compensation Commission (UNCC) was established. A total of \$350 billion in claims was filed by governments, corporations and individuals. 30 percent of limited funds available for the humanitarian programme were diverted to pay for these claims at the very time when mortality rates for children in Iraq had reached peak levels.

At this stage of continuing suffering in Iraq, compensation payments should be agreed upon, especially by those who have wrought death and destruction on Iraq and its people for many years, particularly since the invasion of 2003.

6. Sovereignty Over Oil Resources

Iraq owns one of the largest unexploited oil deposits in the world. If well and fairly managed, it can secure the long-term well being of the country and its people. Iraqis from all political walks of life continue to resist attempts to adopt new oil laws which would deprive Iraq of the full ownership of its oil wealth. It must be part of a peace process for Iraq to regain complete sovereignty over its oil resources and the accruing revenues. This would mean that all 'agreements' to the contrary announced by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) should be declared null and void.^{xi}

7. The Middle East – A Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction

It is far too often forgotten that both the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly long ago insisted that the Middle East shall be a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. This applies to all countries in the Middle East including Israel, which has been a major nuclear power for decades, and to other countries like Iran, which may aspire to become such a power.^{xii}

It does not contribute to peace in the Middle East for the West to follow a double-principled policy, one for Israel and one for other countries in the region. Not even the security of Israel has benefited from this approach. On the contrary, it has encouraged other countries in the region to develop similar capacities. The region as a whole has become more, not less, insecure as a result of a wrong policy.

Peace in the region cannot progress unless a region-wide dismantling of nuclear and other WMD facilities takes place. These facilities must be appropriately monitored and inspected.

8. A Truth and Reconciliation Process

The socio-psychological violence suffered by millions of Iraqis is overshadowed in the public debate and the media by the magnitude of the physical destruction. The need for healing among Iraqis and between Iraqis and those countries that have done such harm to their lives and society simply cannot be overestimated. Not only those who have suffered materially, but the millions who have suffered psychologically, have a human right to receive help. Their problems may fuel future violence and immense hatred if not addressed massively with the best expertise available.

Iraq, like other conflict countries in the past, will need a process and an appropriate institutional arrangement to secure that the larger truth about its contemporary history is revealed and recorded. Victims would thereby receive a measure of recognition and sympathy. Cases of past abuses against humanity must be studied and the lessons learnt applied to Iraq.

9. People to People Cooperation

Governments alone cannot make good the wrong that has been done. It is imperative that people-to-people cooperation be part of a peace process with Iraq. Doctors, nurses, social workers, engineers, teachers and trainers should be among those from outside encouraged to work in Iraq when the new type of UN-led mission is in place. Scholarships within and outside of Iraq must be provided for young Iraqis who have lost many years due to sanctions and invasion. In the spirit of reuniting Iraq with the outside world, students from abroad and civil society organizations should be given opportunities to come to Iraq to learn and share their knowledge. There would be no more convincing way to convey that the outside world wants peace with Iraq and its people.

Many of these initiatives will only be possible when security conditions in Iraq so permit. Until then, there is a range of electronic means that can be used to promote people-to-people contacts and understanding.

10. A Comprehensive Settlement for the Entire Region

The Middle East is one of the most militarized regions in the world. The recent US Government's \$60 billion plan for further arming selected countries against alleged threats from Iran is once again based on a serious misconception of how to create sustained peace and stability. Such power politics have never worked except to promote instability and confrontation.

Today all the crises in different parts of the Middle East are inter-related; none can be solved in isolation from the others. It will, therefore, be an important initiative for peace to convene - under UN and Arab League auspices - a standing regional conference in which all parties to the various conflicts including governments, regional organizations and civil society come together to discuss peace, security and development in the Middle East. It is important to stress the all-inclusiveness of such a regional conference. No party to a conflict must be left out. The conference could be modeled after the historically important OSCE process of the 1970s that was instrumental in dismantling the cold war blocs. Consideration could be given to the creation of an OSCE-ME; a body that would be totally devoted to security and cooperation in the Middle East.

A Final Consideration

The present situation in Iraq, Palestine and other parts of the Middle East is simply undeserving for the people in the area. It is also unworthy of a democracy-minded global community.

This peace proposal should be seen as an encouragement, indeed a moral appeal, to think about and constructively debate ways to end the tragic policy of confrontation and to find new ways of creating peace in and with Iraq and the wider Middle East. Peace is possible. However, it can be achieved only when all actors, governments, civil society and international organizations are willing to leave old and self-serving approaches behind and have the courage and commitment to proceed in new ways.

Notes:

ⁱ See for instance TFF's Open Letter to the SG of the UN at http://www.transnational.org/Resources_Treasures/2007/OpenLetterKi-moon.html

ⁱⁱ We want to acknowledge – and direct your attention to – two other plans which share some similarities with this plan and have attracted sadly little media attention, namely Democratic peace presidential candidate, Dennis Kucinich's *12 Point Plan* which you can access here <http://dk2008.us/endthewar> and the book, *Out of Iraq: A Practical Plan for Withdrawal Now* by George McGovern and William R. Polk http://www.amazon.com/Out-Iraq-Practical-Plan-Withdrawal/dp/B000WMJ656/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1201452791&sr=1-2. The basic content of this plan is available in their article in Harper's Magazine, October 2006, *The Way Out of War: A blueprint for leaving Iraq now* here: <http://www.harpers.org/archive/2006/10/0081225>. Some of the main points in TFF's plan can be found in Jan Oberg's book *Predictable Fiasco. The Conflict with Iraq and Denmark as an Occupying Power* (2004, in Danish).

ⁱⁱⁱ This morally dubious option has been pursued by several countries that have withdrawn e.g. by Denmark whose troops were largely withdrawn in August 2007 without any consideration of how Denmark should and could contribute to healing the wounds and help the Iraqi people to live a normal life again.

^{iv} The relevant documents are UNGA Resolution 3263 of December 9, 1974 and UN Security Council resolution 687/1991.

^v More about the embassy plans from Think Progress of May 29, 2007 <http://thinkprogress.org/2007/05/29/photos-embassy-iraq/>. However, the mentioned drawings from the architectural firm of the embassy no longer exist on its website.

^{vi} See Brookings Institution http://www.brookings.edu/fp/saban/analysis/june2007iraq_partition.htm

^{vii} http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/conflict_disasters/bp105_iraq.html

^{viii} The debt cancellation is announced here <http://www.iraqdirectory.com/DisplayNews.aspx?id=414>

^{ix} More about Iraq's debt here <http://www.cfr.org/publication/7796/#24>

^x Refers to UN SC Res 687

^{xi} Regarding the oil law, see <http://www.iraqoilaw.com/>. See also David Moberg's Iraqi Unions fight the new oil law http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/3261/iraqi_unions_fight_the_new_oil_law

^{xii} See for instance TFF's Open Letter to the SG of the UN at http://www.transnational.org/Resources_Treasures/2007/OpenLetterKi-moon.html