



COMMENTARY

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OUTLOOK IRAQ: PROSPECTS FOR STABILITY IN THE POST-SADDAM ERA

Remarks by His Excellency Howar Ziad, Ambassador of Iraq to Canada to the Joint Royal Canadian Military Institute and Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies Conference held on 11 July, 2006 which also included Ambassador Michael Bell – former Canadian Ambassador to Jordan, Israel and Egypt, Nahlah Ayed – CBC’s Beirut correspondent, and Major Joel Rayburn US Army – Commander’s Advisory Group, US Central Command.

It’s a signal honor to be invited to speak before two distinguished centers of learning: the *Royal Canadian Military Institute* and the *Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies*. In particular, my

thanks to Colonel Chris Corrigan, Mr. David Rudd and Ms. Deborah Bayley for all their generous efforts. Additional thanks are extended to the President of RCMI, Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Dorfman and the Immediate Past President of RCMI. Mr. Matthew Gaasenbeek. Special thanks to my friend Dr. Jawad Hashim, former minister of planning of Iraq, for suggesting my name for this event.

And it has been my privilege, for the last two winters in this flourishing federation of Canada, this model of pluralist democracy and tolerance, to be the first official representative of the first truly democratically elected government in Iraq’s history.

Canadians are easy to like and inspire lasting friendship. I have become very fond of the Canadian way of life, and learned to appreciate *Canadiana* such as Tim Horton, Hockey and skating on the Rideau Canal. I was a big fan of Leonard Cohen and Margaret Atwood way before coming to Canada.

Canadians are never far from the frontline when freedom is at stake, and Canadians have served with distinction in many roles in Iraq, and are doing a magnificent job in Afghanistan.

Canada is the fourth largest contributor to the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI) and chairs its Donor

H.E. Howar Ziad is the Ambassador of Iraq to Canada. Prior to this appointment he was Senior advisor to Mr. Jalal Talabani; general secretary of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and newly elected president of the Republic of Iraq, Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government, UN Liaison Office, New York, USA. Born in the city of Koya, Iraqi Kurdistan, he graduated from Baghdad College, a Jesuit school that was the leading secondary education institute in Iraq prior to pursuing two years of studies at Oxford College of Technology, United Kingdom. Following which he attained a BSc (Economics), from the London School of Economics. He was active in the Kurdish students’ movement in Europe which highlighted the oppression of the Kurdish people by the Iraqi state. He has represented the Kurdish political movement abroad for a number of years

His family has an extensive background of participation in the Kurdish freedom movement. His father, Muhammad “Kaka” Ziad, was a founding member and vice-president of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) under General Mustafa Barzani. Muhammad Ziad was also a member of the Iraqi Parliament during the years of the monarchy (1921-1958).

Committee led by Ambassador Bell. Canada is developing multi-lateral and bilateral engagement. The most potent way for Canada to assist Iraq is to support the new government and the institutions needed to ensure continued stability. Support for constitution building, governance, human rights of women and the strengthening of civil society are key elements of Canada's programme strategy in Iraq. Bilateral engagement to date has included initiatives related to training of police, elections, media, civil society capacity building and restoration of the Mesopotamian marshes.

Canada is also proactive in the Iraqi initiative for a new partnership with the international community- *the International Compact for Iraq*. The purpose of the Compact is to achieve a national vision for Iraq which aims to consolidate peace and pursue political, economic and social development over the next 5 years. The primary focus will be to build a framework for Iraq's economic transformation and integration into the regional and global economy.

Canadian diplomacy took a leadership role in having the "responsibility to protect" principle adopted by last year's UN summit meeting, and Canada has begun applying the principle of "RTF" in the mission in Afghanistan.

The principle of "RTF" establishes the basic need to protect civilians from violence and abuse. If a state's own government cannot

provide proper security for its people through a domestic effort, then the international community has the responsibility to intercede. Canadians led the way in establishing a humane and effective policy.

In the spirit of the new Iraq, I'd like to make some remarks regarding Iraq and then I would welcome questions, so that we can have a discussion, and explore the salient issues together.

In discussing Iraq and the Middle East, I think a warning is required; we must avoid inundation with shibboleths and stereotypes of the Middle East, contrary to the reality on the ground. Too often, from the days of Lawrence of Arabia up to today's "experts", there has been frequent historical revisionism that obscures the identity and experience of its peoples.

In April 2003 after the liberation of Iraq, we began to attempt the reconstruction of a failed state. One of the fallacies that we often hear is that Iraq was somehow functioning and that the liberators destroyed that functioning structure. Saddam's police state was totally dysfunctional: it was utterly corrupt, and relentlessly violent. It had twisted the Oil-for-Food program into a machine for bribery abroad and a means of impoverishing opponents at home, and this was a policy in which the UN Secretariat was complicit.

In addition, Saddam's regime had failed verifiably to disarm as required under international law. While the regime had no usable

stocks of WMD that we have been able to discover, it continued with research and concealment. The security approach of the regime was rooted in its fascist ideology—force was used against perceived, potential and actual opposition. The external security of the state was maintained by a veiled threat that the regime might resort to WMD. There was no concept of guilt or innocence. An individual could be expelled from his or her home or murdered simply because he or she was a member of what the regime considered to be the "wrong" ethnic group. It is not true that the regime was 'hemmed in' and no threat prior to the liberation: until the very end, it was executing perceived opponents and "ethnically cleansing" Kurds from the city of Kirkuk.

Quite capable of terrorizing the country's citizens, Iraq's security forces were utterly incompetent when it came to genuine national security. They were instruments of murder and repression, not of national sovereignty and pride. They were used to reward criminal and kleptocratic elite, not to create a sense of civic engagement and patriotism among Iraq's many disparate communities. The atrocious performance of the Iraqi armed forces in the three futile wars fought by Saddam: against Iran, the invasion of Kuwait and the war in defiance of UN resolutions in 2003 underscores this point. And these failures were despite investing massive sums in the armed forces, and despite having air superiority against Iran.

Naturally, many countries, especially those who would later oppose the liberation of Iraq, were more than happy to sell Iraq billions of dollars of weapons, billions of dollars stolen from the Iraqi people and placed in the coffers of foreign arms manufacturers. These companies were complicit in Saddam's crimes.

By the start of this century, there was no leadership worthy of the name. The Iraqi armed forces under Saddam contained thousands of generals. Proportionately, Saddam's army had far more generals relative to his number of soldiers (6000 Iraqi four star generals); unlike larger armed forces, such as those belonging to the United States. Good, promising officers were not groomed or promoted. Rather, they were likely to be executed because the regime feared them.

Many of those in charge of military operations were incompetent with little or no military training and hardly any experience, for example Saddam's 30 year old son Qusai was the commander of the Special Republican Guards. They were promoted not on grounds of merit but because they were supporters of the regime, and blindly loyal to it. Corruption was rife. What mattered for many in the officer corps, dominated by members of the Sunni Arab community, particularly from Mosul and Tikrit, was status, not success or a sense of professionalism.

Being a member of the officer corps conferred economic and

social benefits, education for their children abroad, the best medical treatment for them and their families, sometimes abroad, subsidized cars, and ample opportunities for graft.

The armed forces were internally hierarchical in a manner that made no sense at all. In addition to the army there was the supposedly "elite" Republican Guard, and then the even more "elite" Special Republican Guard.

The higher up the status-chain one went, the more likely the unit was to be dominated by members of the Sunni Arab community. At the very bottom of this perverse pyramid, over 80% of the privates in Saddam's army were Shi'a Arabs, men forcibly recruited into the armed forces through a brutal conscription system. Iraq was like the South African apartheid state: the officer corps was drawn from a minority group, while the majority formed the rank and file.

As for the internal security forces, their purpose was not domestic law and order but enforcing compliance with the regime. There were militias such as the Fedayeen Saddam, a gang of state sponsored thugs that murdered people in public, including beheading women in public for alleged immoral acts. The regime based its internal security system on Yuri Andropov's Soviet Union. Multiple competing intelligence services were established, each keeping an eye on the other. At the very bottom of the pyramid of repression there was a corrupt and incompe-

tent police, whose main function was to prey on the public.

This is the so-called 'functioning' state that we inherited from the old regime. This is why it made particular sense to close down the army in particular shortly after the liberation. The Iraqi army had died on the battle field. Its formal dissolution was precisely that, a formality. By issuing an order abolishing the army, L. Paul Bremer signaled that there would be a new beginning in Iraq, thereby ensuring the support of the vast majority of Iraqis for the bid to set up a democratic government.

To be sure, the former ruling caste for whom military service had been a trough, objected to this measure. But even keeping the army formally intact would have offended them if it had not remained the same vehicle for corruption, sectarian domination, repression and privilege that it had been from its inception.

The strategy of the new government therefore is to create military structures that are the opposite of the old: functioning, capable, effective, truly representative of society, under democratic, civilian control and respected, not feared, by the people and our international partners.

We have much to learn from Canada, which has a professional army dedicated to defending its democracy, and to keeping peace in the rest of the world rather than threatening it. The Canadian army is also a bilingual army, and a multicultural one: it is based on

respect for all of Canada's communities and not just a privileged minority as in Ba'athist Iraq.

We have to build new security forces while fighting one of the most vicious terrorist campaigns ever, a campaign not of resistance, as we too often hear, but of a formerly ruling caste seeking to re-impose its fascist, supremacist ideology in league with foreign jihadists and religious fascists who share similar goals to the ousted Ba'athists.

The new security forces aim to be instruments of order and peace, not of internal repression and external aggression. They have their problems; overcoming the old ways will always be difficult and time consuming. And patience is essential to the construction of an effective Iraqi security force: a well-prepared unit has more chance to succeed in military operations. Iraq wants capable soldiers, not men thrown together in desperation; we know from experience that an ill-prepared unit will simply disintegrate when it encounters tough warfare. The coalition now consists of more Iraqi soldiers than any other nation; and slowly but surely, Iraq will be able to protect itself on its own.

But the very well publicized problems, interestingly better publicized than the problems of the previous security forces, are less important than the fundamental soundness of our strategy.

Iraq needs to be able to police and protect itself. Its forces should

be recruited on a voluntary basis, because free men and women fight better than slaves. The best forces to beat any rising or terrorist campaign are local forces. Such forces have the intelligence and local knowledge that is vital. They also have a profound legitimacy. This is why our new constitution specifies that regional governments can have their own security forces. *The Kurdistan Regional Government* already has such forces and these are recognized as the most effective in Iraq. Indeed they were the only indigenous Iraqi forces to participate in the liberation of the country in 2003.

Building up the new security forces also means shifting responsibilities. We need to lower the profile and role of the non-Iraqi Coalition forces (Iraq is formally part of the Coalition consisting currently of 32 countries) and place more of the burden on Iraqi forces. This is an ongoing process that is occurring as and when Iraqi forces are ready. We absolutely refuse to set a timetable of any kind that is not related to our capabilities and force structure.

The Coalition is present in Iraq under UN Security Council resolution and designed to highlight international support for the democratic process in Iraq. Our Coalition partners have made it clear that they will not abandon the democratic cause in Iraq, and we are obliged to them for their generosity and steadfast resolution. The sacrifice and courage of our friends in the United States is testimony, if it were needed, to the virtues and

strength of democracy. I ask our friend from CENTCOM to take this message back to his comrades in arms: thank you, Iraq and its peoples remember and are grateful for all that you have done.

To achieve this handover, there has to be intensive training and logistical support as well as the daily military to military contact that leads to soldiers learning from each other. Many countries, including Canada, have contributed to training the new Iraqi forces and your assistance has been greatly appreciated. Your soldiers and police have distinguished themselves and are world renowned for their professionalism and effectiveness.

The training and advisory role of the non-Iraqi Coalition forces is likely to be a long-term one. As I said before, the transformation of Iraq will take time. Force levels will change. In the short-term we are likely to see a reduction in the foreign troop presence, but such decisions are up to commanders on the ground and the democratically elected Coalition governments.

In addition, the non-Iraqi Coalition presence is vital to reassure Iraqis that they will not again be abandoned and also to deter external threats. Too many of Iraq's neighbours would like to undermine our nascent democracy, or have been negligent in respecting its territorial integrity and its new constitutional order. The presence of our international allies helps to deter them and forces them to make their support for the

terrorists more covert than they would like. Of course, we would prefer that they rendered no support to terrorists at all and we are in constant dialogue with them to end the support and facilitation that is presently occurring.

One example of the success of our dialogue with our neighbors was the assistance extended to us by Jordan in the hunt for Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The death of this fascist terrorist was an important achievement. It is nonsense to claim, as some have done, that the US and Iraqi governments built him up, or that his death makes no difference. Al-Zarqawi was responsible for thousands of deaths and it

is frankly insulting and ignorant of so-called experts to call him a Coalition media creation. This is the man who killed Sayed Baqir Hakim to provoke civil war; the man who killed Sergio di Mello and his colleagues, thus putting an end to the United Nations presence in Baghdad, and who by implication declared the majority of Iraqis to be apostates and traitors. Ending the existence of this one man is not the end of the whole problem, but it shows that those who choose the path of terrorism will face the consequences.

The fundamental basis of the new Iraq is the millions of Iraqis who participated, for the first time

in its history in truly democratic elections — two elections and one referendum in a single year. Ours is a democratic republic, not a republic of fear.

We will never permit the old regime to return nor the terrorists to install a theocratic fascist regime. With your help and our other democratic allies, we shall prevail. It is my profound wish that when my successor in year 2016 speaks before you he or she will do so as a representative of a flourishing democracy and pluralist federation in Iraq.

Thank you for listening. 🍁