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**UN Economic Sanctions and Iraq:  
A Critical Analysis of a Failed Policy**

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*by*

*Saif Abu Gulal*

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## **SAIF ABU-GULAL**

Saif Abu-Gulal is a Dutch businessman of Iraqi origin with extensive first hand knowledge and expertise on Iraqi politics and economics. He has represented numerous Dutch companies in their dealings with Iraq. As well, he has advised the Netherlands Foreign Trade Agency EVD, which is part of the Dutch Economic Ministry, on developments in Iraq. Saif is presently completing a Ph.D. at the University of Durham on the Political Economy of Iraq.

## *Introduction*

Ever since its seizure of Kuwait in 1990, Iraq has been subjected to a comprehensive array of UN economic sanctions. Instead of being suspended after Iraqi forces were driven from Kuwait in 1991, the sanctions regime was actually enhanced and extended for an indefinite period of time. The aim of this policy was essentially to drive the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and his regime out of power, or, failing that, to isolate Iraq and prevent it from exercising any kind of significant regional or international influence for as long as Saddam continued to rule.

The ultimate effect of the sanctions has been the disruption, and indeed the virtual elimination, of international trade with, and investment in, Iraq for over a decade. The deprivation and suffering of the Iraqi people over this period, has been truly catastrophic. Yet, Saddam remains in power. Indeed, he is in a more secure position than ever before, and is more popular among his own people and among the masses in other Arab countries. Moreover, after a decade of economic and diplomatic isolation, Saddam is closer today than he ever has been to achieving his cherished objectives of eliminating the sanctions and becoming once more a force to be reckoned with internationally.

As time has passed, both Middle Eastern countries and important global powers have become increasingly critical of the sanctions policy as a whole. In recent years, a considerable number of countries have actually joined Saddam in calling for a complete and immediate suspension of all sanctions. Moreover, many international companies, with the full support of their respective governments, have violated the UN travel ban and sent delegations to Iraq to negotiate a wide variety of business contracts. Hence, it now seems clear that there is no longer a sufficient international consensus to maintain anything resembling a comprehensive economic blockade.

By the year 2000, even the United States, Saddam's most implacable opponent and the driving force behind the long-term continuation of the sanctions, had begun to concede publicly that a change in policy was needed. The new policy proposed by Washington would replace the blanket sanctions with "smart" sanctions designed to specifically target those areas of the Iraqi economy that might allow Saddam to rebuild his military or create weapons of mass destruction. However, even after more than a year of negotiations with other members of the Security Council, the US has been unable to generate

sufficient support for a smart sanctions policy. Most of the other Security Council members seem to favour a complete suspension of all sanctions.

The tragic events of September 11th have served to further harden US resolve on the question of Iraq's potential international rehabilitation, and the Bush administration has clearly been considering the possibility of removing Saddam's regime by force. Undoubtedly, there is great international sympathy for America's anger and its need to take action to protect itself from future terrorist attacks. Yet, most nations, both in the Middle East region and across the whole of the international community, have made it clear that they will not accept the US' use of the "war on terrorism" as a pretext to launch a new military operation against Iraq. How Washington will ultimately respond to the growing international consensus against its preferred Iraq policies remains to be seen.

My purpose in this paper is to examine the genesis, development and failure of the sanctions policy in order to answer the following important questions: How has Saddam managed to so effectively turn the tables on the international community over the past decade? How is it that his regime, which is still condemned and despised by so many for its brutality and aggressive posturing, has increasingly been able to gain international support for its agenda, while the US has become increasingly isolated and has come under increasing international pressure as a result of its determination to maintain some sort of containment policy?

Essentially, I will argue that a number of different factors have contributed significantly to this state of affairs. With respect to Iraq's Arab neighbours, humanitarian, security, ideological and economic imperatives have all played an important role. Outside the region, with reference to Russia, France, China and other influential countries that have become increasingly strong opponents of the sanctions, I would concede that humanitarian concerns have also been important. However, I will strongly assert that the primary factors for these states have been the impact of Globalisation, increasing pressure from business interests and the Iraqi regime's astute management of these forces. As I will show, a strong conflict of economic and political/security interests has been in evidence even within the United States over the past few years, making a change in the sanctions policy inevitable.

It should be recognised that, partly as a result of developments concerning Iraq, there is a heated and ongoing theoretical debate about the efficacy of sanctions policies in general. However, I feel I should note here that I will not make any categorical statements one way or the other about that issue in the context of this paper, which is far too limited in scope to contain such a discussion. What I hope to demonstrate is simply that the failure of sanctions in Iraq has resulted from a complex conjunction of political and economic circumstances and processes. Naturally, there is a good possibility that this has broader implications that are worthy of further study.

The paper is divided into three main sections. In the first section, I will look at the underlying reasons for the initial implementation of the sanctions policy and identify its main objectives. In the second section, I will chart the gradual erosion of international support for the blanket sanctions and consider the international community's response to US proposals to: 1) establish a more limited sanctions policy; or 2) take action to remove Saddam's regime from power. Finally, in the third section, I will examine in detail the different factors and processes that have contributed to the prevailing attitudes about Iraq in the current international climate.

### *Section One: The Origins and Objectives of the Sanctions Regime*

The UN Security Council took the original decision to impose a comprehensive regime of economic sanctions on Iraq shortly after the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait began in 1990. The objective of the policy at this point was fairly clear: to censure Saddam Hussein's regime for its violation of international law and to apply pressure to persuade Iraq to withdraw its forces from Kuwait. As events developed, the international community ultimately chose military action rather than sustained financial pressure as the primary means of ending the occupation. Saddam's forces were driven from Kuwait in the "Gulf War" of 1991 by an international coalition of forces led by the United States and including many of Iraq's Arab neighbours.

However, rather than reducing or suspending the sanctions after the conclusion of the war, the Security Council chose, with the support of a broad international consensus, to enhance them and extend them to cover an effectively indefinite period of time. This decision was partly a result of the UN's desire to send a strong message to Iraq and other would-be aggressors that the organisation could and would attach a high economic price to hostility against its member states. However, and more importantly, the policy

was also the product of a complex agenda which reflected the fact that key actors in the international community regarded the resolution of the Gulf conflict as far from satisfactory.

While Saddam's forces had been defeated militarily and driven from Kuwait, he and his regime remained in power in Baghdad, occupying such a strongly entrenched position that it would be effectively impossible to remove them without engaging in a major invasion of Iraq. At least three political and practical obstacles at the time ensured that such an operation would be problematic at best.

To begin with, it would have placed extreme stress on the fragile regional and international coalition that had been forged specifically to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. The Arab regimes of the coalition, especially, had to confront the fact that even this operation had raised serious and deeply divisive issues at the mass level in their respective societies. For many people across the Arab world, Saddam had become a genuinely popular figure due to his willingness to challenge the West and Israel. His insistence that he would not respect UN resolutions until Israel was forced to comply with previous resolutions calling for its withdrawal from occupied Palestinian territories had a particularly significant resonance for many Arabs.

The war had also raised a number of other legitimacy issues that, in some cases, were even more problematic. To cite only one particularly significant example, the presence of so many non-Muslim Western troops, including some female soldiers, in Saudi Arabia had generated considerable protest among conservative Muslim elements in that country. This placed the regime under a great deal of internal pressure, a circumstance which persists, to some extent, to the present day. And it is probably worth noting in this context that the continuing presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia since that time has frequently been cited as a justification for terrorist attacks by Osama bin Laden and other Islamic extremists.

Thus, even though it is probably accurate to say that most Arab regimes wished to see a change of regime in Iraq after the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, their need to protect their own legitimacy, which in some cases was already under serious challenge, meant that they had to be very circumspect about the prospect of a continuing war to unseat Saddam. The additional

collateral damage that would almost surely be suffered by the Iraqi people in such a conflict would only serve to further inflame popular opinion.

A second obstacle to removing Saddam via a major military campaign was posed by the fact that the costs, both human and economic, were deemed prohibitive by virtually all members of the coalition, especially given the very real possibility that a prolonged occupation and expensive rebuilding process would follow. The reservations of Washington on these grounds were, perhaps, especially noteworthy. As the only remaining superpower, the US had naturally become Iraq's foremost antagonist in the conflict, and had, therefore, contributed more militarily and economically than any other coalition member. Although the war had enjoyed considerable popular support in America up to this point, it was by no means clear that such support could be expected to continue if the number of US casualties started to rise significantly, if the war persisted for an extended period of time, or if it began to have a significant negative impact on the American economy.

A third and final obstacle to removing Saddam by invading Iraq was that it was far from certain that the immediate geo-strategic consequences of destroying the Iraqi ruling structure established by Saddam's regime would be positive. Saddam's suppression of potential opposition elements had been so effective that it was, for all intents and purposes, impossible to envisage an alternative regime that met the necessary preconditions of being: 1) authentic, in the sense that it would enjoy the requisite support across the whole of Iraq, with respect to both geographical and social divisions; 2) viable, in the sense of being sufficiently unified and competent to function as a national government; and 3) desirable, in the sense that it would contribute to stability by maintaining (or at least failing to disrupt) the regional balance of power.

It should be recognised, of course, that the war had occasioned considerable opposition activity in the country, but not to the extent that Saddam's security forces were unable to cope. Furthermore, in some cases, the active opposition elements themselves posed difficult problems from the perspective of significant regional and international actors. For example, some of the most significant opposition to Saddam in the North of the country emanated from Kurdish resistance groups. However, in addition to being geographically limited, this opposition was strongly based in Kurdish aspirations for the creation of an independent Kurdistan. This naturally heightened the security concerns of neighbouring countries with activist Kurdish minorities such as Turkey and Iran. To cite another example, there was also some resistance

activity from Shi'ite fundamentalist groups. However, most members of the coalition were strongly averse to the possibility that a Shi'ite fundamentalist regime might emerge in Iraq and align itself with Iran.

Given the fact that the major coalition members were thus either unable or unwilling to prosecute a war to remove Saddam's regime, the consensus among external actors seems to have been that the possible desirable outcomes were limited to: 1) either a genuine mass revolution by the Iraqi people as a whole; or 2) a coup d'état by political and/or military elements that would remove Saddam and his close allies but leave the bulk of the existing ruling structure in place. It was generally recognised that the circumstances within Iraq at the time were such that neither of these outcomes would be likely to emerge, in either the short or the long term, unless the international community continued to apply heavy economic pressure. Thus maintaining economic pressure was seen by much of the international community as a key imperative.

It was also recognised that even sustained pressure would not necessarily produce the desired result of forcing Saddam out of power. For as long as Saddam's regime managed to stay in power, and in the eventuality that it would be able to persist for a long time, a second imperative was to keep Saddam's regime as weak as possible and to limit his ability to exert any kind of regional or international influence.

The enhancement and extension of the sanctions regime was essentially intended to address both of these imperatives. In short, the principal aim of the policy was to drive Saddam out of power if possible, or failing that, to stop him from ever again becoming a real force in the Middle East. Of course, this central objective can be sub-divided into a number of more specific component objectives. These may be summarised as follows:

- To prevent Saddam's regime from taking advantage of Iraq's considerable oil wealth to rebuild Iraq's economy
- To weaken the regime's domestic position by forcing it to contend with the dissatisfaction of Iraq's impoverished citizens
- To prevent the regime from using Iraq's potentially significant economic influence as a way of rehabilitating itself as a legitimate regional and international actor
- To prevent the regime from rebuilding its conventional military forces

- To give the UN an economic lever to pressure the regime into complying with measures designed to stop it from producing and stockpiling weapons of mass destruction

### *Section Two: The Erosion of International Support for Sanctions and Military Action Against Iraq*

Although it is certainly true that it was generally accepted at the time of the sanctions' initial implementation that their duration would be indefinite, it seems very unlikely that anyone anticipated at the time that they would continue for over a decade, exact such a heavy toll on the Iraqi people and have so little practical effect in terms of undermining Saddam's regime. On the contrary, it is probably accurate to suggest that, in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, there was an overly optimistic expectation in the international community that Saddam's days in power were numbered.

As time passed, months becoming years and years stretching to over a decade, it became clear: 1) that even during and directly after the war, Saddam's position within Iraq was never as seriously threatened as many in the international community had hoped and/or imagined; 2) that his position was possibly becoming even stronger over time; and 3) that, in some respects, the sanctions were actually contributing to his ability to maintain his stranglehold on power. A natural consequence of this growing awareness was that the countries that made up the international coalition which opposed Iraq during the Gulf War, and that supported the continuation of the economic blockade thereafter, have gradually become increasingly disenchanted with the sanctions policy.

Many Arab countries began calling for an end to sanctions as soon as it became clear that the Iraqi people, rather than Saddam and his government, were bearing the brunt of the hardship associated with them. By 1995, conditions in Iraq had become so bad that the UN was virtually forced to make some sort of modification to the sanctions regime on humanitarian grounds. The result was Resolution 968, which established the first "Oil for Food" facility. This allowed the Iraqi regime to sell up to 2 billion USD (US dollars) every 180 days on the condition that the money raised could only be used to buy and import food, medicine and other items specifically identified by the UN.

I would suggest that, ultimately, this was a very serious concession. Although it can hardly be criticised in terms of its humanitarian intent, it served to significantly strengthen Saddam's hand, because it gave the Iraqi regime control over the funds generated. This allowed Saddam to bolster his internal position through his direct control of the patronage that the oil sales created, and to create the public perception in Iraq that he was a great benefactor who had worked tirelessly to win some relief from oppressive sanctions unjustly imposed on the Iraqi people by the West. Since not all the money was necessarily spent on food and other necessary humanitarian purchases, it also provided him with funds to pursue his other objectives. Thus, the Oil for Food programme contravened almost directly the underlying intent of the sanctions regime as a whole. Admittedly, it only gave Saddam's regime limited room for manoeuvre, but it demonstrated that the international community was no longer prepared to prosecute the sanctions ruthlessly, and this prompted Saddam to work at further weakening his opponents' resolve.

Subsequently, Saddam's regime took almost every possible opportunity to challenge the limits of the sanctions regime, making a particular issue of the UNSCOM weapons inspection mechanism that had been set up by UN Resolution 687 in 1991 to ensure that the regime was not able to produce chemical or biological weapons or weapons of mass destruction. While the US and the UK tended to favour responding to non-compliance with punitive air strikes and bomb attacks against suspected weapons installations, the international community as a whole was critical of such aggression and preferred to negotiate with Saddam's regime. The chief consequence of this preference was that the Oil for Food programme was continuously renewed, amended, relaxed and further compromised to the advantage of the Iraqi regime. In 1998 Iraq ejected the UN weapons inspectors and ceased all co-operation with UNSCOM. Negotiations to install some kind of new inspection system have continued, fruitlessly, ever since. Nevertheless, in 2000, UN Resolution 1330 eliminated the revenue ceiling on Iraqi oil sales and provided still more flexibility with respect to how the regime would be allowed to use the funds.

Particularly over the past few years, key global powers, including permanent Security Council members France, Russia and China, have become more and more critical of the sanctions policy as a whole. In 1999, the UN passed Resolution 1284 which authorised the possible suspension of sanctions, provided that Iraq would agree to comply with UNMOVIC, a new weapons

inspection system designed to replace UNSCOM. Saddam's regime refused and effectively demanded an immediate and unconditional suspension of the sanctions regime. It was a telling blow to the future of the sanctions policy that this notion received support from a considerable number of countries, not only in the Arab world, but across the whole of the international community. It was becoming clear that there was no longer a sufficient international consensus to maintain anything like a comprehensive economic blockade. Even the United States, Saddam's chief Gulf War antagonist and the strongest advocate of the sanctions policy, began suggesting in late 2000 that the blanket sanctions should be replaced with so-called "smart" sanctions which would specifically target certain areas of the Iraqi economy. At one point in the spring of 2001, the US was apparently ready to support a British proposal in the UN that would end all sanctions with the exception of those banning the trade of weapons-related materials.<sup>1</sup>

In a statement before the Senate Foreign Relations committee, US Secretary of State Colin Powell explained the new Bush administration's change of policy: "When we took over on the 20th of January, I discovered that we had an Iraq policy that was in disarray; it was falling apart. We were losing support for the sanctions regime... (it) was collapsing. More and more nations were saying let's just get rid of the sanctions, let's not worry about inspectors, let's just forget it. There was all kinds of leakage from the frontline states, or down through the Persian Gulf with the smuggling of oil."<sup>2</sup>

Subsequently, the US delegation at the UN once again raised the possibility of introducing a resolution that would establish a proposed set of smart sanctions. When Russia threatened to veto any such resolution, it touched off a series of intense behind the scenes negotiations amongst the security council members.

At this point, the tragic events of September 11th and the ensuing war in Afghanistan caused a temporary pause in the ongoing international debate about the sanctions and generated considerable uncertainty about the future focus of US policy towards Iraq. Washington has long argued that Saddam's

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<sup>1</sup> *The Guardian*, Thursday 17 May, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Powell explains changes in Iraq sanctions policy, at Budget Hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 08 March 2001, U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesman.

regime is a key sponsor of international terrorism, so it was natural that some policy makers in the US would conclude that Iraq should be the next target of America's "war on terrorism". However, while George W. Bush identified Iraq as one of the three powers in his "axis of evil" and administration officials continue to openly discuss the possibility of taking some kind of action to bring about a "regime change", it remains unclear whether or not the US is prepared to initiate a major military operation without first securing a measure of international and regional support.

Such support clearly has not been forthcoming thus far, and it seems unlikely to emerge in the near future. Although the major international powers and the governments of most Middle Eastern countries have been generally supportive with respect to the war against the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda network, this attitude has been based, to a great extent, on the international community's acceptance of the evidence and intelligence the US has produced to link bin Laden and his followers to the September 11th attacks. Up to this point, the US has failed to produce enough evidence that Iraq is engaging in any kind of serious international terrorist activity to persuade any other country that radical action needs to be taken to deal with Saddam. The UK has refused to rule out the possibility of military action against Iraq, but most other regional and international actors have openly stated their opposition to such a policy.

In December, Sergey Ordzhonikidze, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, commented that Russia is, "categorically against conducting a military operation in regards to Baghdad in the framework of the next phase in the fight against international terrorism."<sup>3</sup> French Foreign Minister, Hubert Vedrine, declared that, "Military action against Iraq cannot be justified within the United States' war against terrorism... No European country believes it is in the logic of the anti-terrorist drive to undertake something against Iraq. Even those in the United States arguing openly for American action against Iraq are not saying anymore there is a link to the (September 11th) attacks."<sup>4</sup> German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, expressed the same sentiment even more strongly, saying, "All European nations would view a broadening

<sup>3</sup> *AFP*, 21 December 2001.

<sup>4</sup> *Reuters*, 21 December 2001.

(of the conflict) to include Iraq highly sceptically-- and that is putting it diplomatically."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps even more significantly, the US has been unable to convince any of the regional actors whose logistical support they would almost certainly need to undertake a successful campaign against Iraq. All Arab states with the sole exception of Kuwait have openly and vehemently rejected both the necessity and the legitimacy of any possible attack on Iraq at this point. Amr Musa, the Secretary General of the Arab League, effectively summed up the general view on this issue, noting that an attack would be a "fatal mistake" and that it "would mean the end of the understanding on how to fight terrorism."<sup>6</sup> One must question whether removing Saddam is as important to the US as maintaining co-operative relations with the other Arab states, without whose support it will be unable to advance other aspects of its regional agenda, such as the ongoing peace process and actions against other Islamic terrorist groups.

Turkey, long one of America's key strategic allies in the region, has also clearly expressed its opposition to military action. A government spokesman raised the question: "Is there any new mistake committed by Iraq or are accounts of ten years ago being settled?" Furthermore, General Huseyin Kivrikoglu, chief of Turkey's general staff, has made it plain that he fears an attack would have consequences detrimental to his country's own security interests. An Associated Press report from 25 December, 2001, stated: "Kivrikoglu indicated that if Saddam is ousted, Iraqi Kurds would take advantage of a power vacuum to set up a Kurdish state, which may boost the aspirations of autonomy-seeking Kurds inside Turkey. (He commented) 'Nobody would like this country (Iraq) to fall apart leading to the emergence of new ethnic states.'"<sup>7</sup>

While the US continues to consider its other options in light of these global and regional sentiments, negotiations about the possibility of smart sanctions have resumed. The UN has scheduled a formal Security Council discussion on the matter for May 2002, the third such discussion in the course of a year. The Iraqi regime, perhaps concerned about the possibility of US military action,

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<sup>5</sup> *Reuters*, 28 November 2001.

<sup>6</sup> *AFP*, 28 November 2001.

<sup>7</sup> *AP*, 25 December 2001.

has initiated contact with the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, about the possibility of implementing Resolution 1284, but it is unclear what results, if any, these discussions will produce.

Whatever formal steps the UN ultimately takes with respect to the sanctions, it should be recognised that, to a very great extent, they have already lost their force. The travel ban designed to prevent potential trading partners and investors from going to Iraq to arrange business deals is no longer respected or enforced, and anyone visiting Baghdad today could hardly fail to see the extraordinary changes that have occurred with respect to the de facto erosion of the economic boycott. The directors of major foreign companies are all but openly lobbying, arranging deals and competing with each other for billions of dollars worth of commercially lucrative contracts. Potential investors are filling the famous Al-Rahseed hotel and the luxurious Al-Finjan restaurant in Baghdad. Moreover, international trade fairs in Baghdad in November of both 2000 and 2001 were very well attended by international companies, as was an International Exhibition and Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq's Infrastructure, held in Baghdad in February 2002.

Major petroleum companies have also been working, with some success, to circumvent the sanctions for literally years now. As one commentator for *The Times* newspaper noted at the beginning of 2001: "Iraq is the cock of gold for oil multinationals and no one should be surprised that Shell is flirting with the regime that guards the world's second-largest oil reserves." The same article stated: "The Anglo-Dutch Oil Company, yesterday admitted that it has been holding talks with President Saddam Hussein's regime on future oil exploration, once sanctions against Iraq are lifted. In a further sign that the decade-old international embargo against Baghdad is falling apart, a spokeswoman for the company confirmed that contacts had been taking place on and off since 1994."<sup>8</sup>

### *Section Three: The Failure of the Sanctions Policy—A Critical Analysis*

I will now proceed to look in detail at the various factors and processes that have resulted not only in the gradual collapse of international support for the comprehensive sanctions policy, but also in the generation of increasing support for a total suspension of sanctions, as opposed to a more limited smart

<sup>8</sup> *The Times*, Wednesday 17 January 2001.

sanctions policy. In effect, I would observe that the international community, with the exception of the US and its few remaining supporters concerning this issue, does not seem to be so much abandoning the old policy reluctantly as wholeheartedly embracing the international rehabilitation of Iraq. I think it would be accurate to say that Saddam and his regime are hardly considered any more meritorious or trustworthy by most world leaders today than they were a decade ago. Hence, even taking into account a general humanitarian consensus that the Iraqi people have suffered enough, the change of attitude by so many governments remains quite puzzling on the face of things.

As I suggested in the introduction to the paper, I think a distinction has to be made here between the factors that have influenced the Arab states and Iraq's other regional neighbours, on the one hand, and major global actors like the permanent Security Council members and the more developed economies on the other. Consequently, my analysis is divided into two sub-sections.

#### A) Regional Actors and the Sanctions Policy

It should be remembered that, initially, the economic blockade was not merely a measure favoured by the US and its European allies, but was also supported by the Arab states of the Gulf War coalition. The reasons that this support began to erode fairly quickly, and disappeared almost entirely over time, are fairly straightforward and easy to understand. Humanitarian, security, ideological and economic imperatives all played a significant role.

While it was one thing for Arab governments to support a policy that punished Saddam and kept him weak, it was quite another for them to continue to support it as time passed and the devastating suffering the sanctions were inflicting on the Iraqi people became clear. Even though the Arab regimes were under pressure from the US to continue supporting the policy, they were under greater pressure on humanitarian grounds and as a result of massive discontent about the situation within their own borders.

In his opening address to the Arab Summit in March 2001, King Abdullah II of Jordan clearly articulated the policy preferences that many of Iraq's Arab neighbours have been expressing for some years now: "The inconceivable suffering of our brethren in Iraq has gone on for far too long. It is time to end this suffering and to lift the embargo on Iraq."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *AFP*, 27 March 2001.

The fact that the US was unable to deliver any substantive results in ten years worth of efforts to mediate between the Palestinians and the Israelis did not help matters, and developments over the past couple of years provided the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. The Palestinian uprising and the subsequent landslide victory of Ariel Sharon in the Israeli elections dramatically increased Arab concerns about Israel. It is hardly surprising, amid this growing atmosphere of uncertainty and apprehension, that the Arab regimes would be inclined to move closer together.

And, of course, Saddam has done everything in his power to exploit the situation. As I indicated previously, he gained huge support among the Arab masses in 1990 and 1991 by saying that he would not respect UN resolutions against Iraq until Israel was forced to abide by the resolutions requiring them to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza. He has continued to criticise the failings of the peace process ever since, and while other Arab regimes have been very careful in their public statements, he has echoed the sentiments of many among the Arab masses by becoming one of the most vocal supporters of the current Palestinian uprising and by blaming the Americans for not doing anything to stop Israeli attacks on the Palestinian people. In addition, Saddam has been distributing financial, and possibly military, aid to the Al-Aqsa Brigade and other Palestinian organisations.

The following statement is a fairly typical example of the kind of rhetoric that has been emanating from Baghdad in recent years: "Rise up, dear ones, for whom we are ready to sacrifice anything. Say to your enemies, the enemies of our Arab nation who are the foul Jewish usurpers, their covetous allies and all the colonialists and their abject servants: Stop abusing the Arab nation."<sup>10</sup>

The popularity of such sentiments among the Arab masses should not be doubted. "Really, it's not just the money, it's Saddam's just and strong political position. He doesn't give in to Israel or America. He doesn't give in. He represents us." declared the mother of a boy killed in the Intifada to a BBC correspondent in Ramallah.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *BBC News Online*, 17 July 2001.

<sup>11</sup> *BBC News Online*, 6 August 2001.

And the impact of Saddam's linkage of the sanctions issue to the ongoing plight of the Palestinian people is not limited to the mass level. Many Arab politicians and academics have come to agree with Saddam's view that the sanctions represent a Western, and particularly American, double standard that favours Israel and punishes the Arabs. For most Arab regimes, the continuation of the sanctions has become, at best, a cause for embarrassment. UAE Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Sultan Al Nahyan commented last year in an interview with the London based newspaper *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, "The US, while seeking to revamp sanctions on Iraq, gives different measures to international legitimacy. At the same time as Washington seems to be very strict in implementing international resolutions against Iraq, it stands strongly against any form of condemnation of Israel's aggression against the defenceless Palestinian civilians".<sup>12</sup> Jawad Al Hamad, the head of the Jordanian based Middle East Studies Centre echoed the same sentiment in another Arab newspaper: "The sanctions are part of a US plan to weaken the Arab stand against Israel..."<sup>13</sup>

Saddam's popular influence has made it difficult for other Arab leaders to ignore or condemn him. Neither the Arab regimes nor the US can convince the Arab people that Iraq is the enemy they should really be worried about while Israel is attacking the Palestinians and even conducting occasional air strikes against Lebanon. On the contrary, the changing circumstances have caused the Arab regimes to play down their association with the US and to start opening up towards Iraq. For the first time since the war, the predominantly state-owned and state-controlled media organs in many Arab countries have begun calling for Iraq's rehabilitation. And, at least as far as many regional states are concerned, whatever the UN decides, the sanctions are already a thing of the past. The economic benefits of resuming trade with Iraq have proven irresistible to most of its regional neighbours.

Syria recently unveiled plans for major new oil pipelines with Iraq, while Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Libya signed free trade agreements with Baghdad in early 2001.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, it concluded free trade agreements with the UAE and Yemen.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Iraq expects to close similar deals with the

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<sup>12</sup> *Gulf News Online Edition*, 20 July 2001.

<sup>13</sup> *The Star* (A Jordanian weekly), 29 April 2001, Issue No.43.

<sup>14</sup> *Reuters*, 02 August 2001.

<sup>15</sup> *Arabic News*, 24 December 2001.

Oman, Jordan, Lebanon and Algeria. These trade agreements will bypass and supplement the UN Oil for Food programme.<sup>16</sup>

Since the start of the Oil for Food programme in 1995, the total volume of trade between Iraq and the Arab countries in the Mashriq has reached USD10.6 Billion. The largest trading partner is Egypt at USD 2.4 Billion, followed by Jordan at USD 2.23 Billion, then the UAE at USD 2.08 Billion, Tunisia at USD1.07 Billion, Saudi Arabia at USD 638 Million, Syria at USD 547 Million, Lebanon at USD 510 Million, and Oman at USD 3.8 Million. Iraq's trade with Arab countries constitutes 50 % of its total foreign trade for the period.<sup>17</sup>

Iraq continues to have a special financial relationship with Jordan, which imports 5 million tons of Iraqi oil every year. Half of this is free, and the rest is purchased at preferential rates significantly below market price. Saddam represents this as a gift to the Jordanian people. At the same time, Iraq provides a market for Jordanian goods, and imports over 450 million USD worth annually.

In addition to trading with its close Arab neighbours, Iraq has also cultivated trade relations with the Arab countries in North Africa. A 100-strong Algerian business delegation signed 12 contracts worth USD 100 million in Baghdad in the summer of 2001.<sup>18</sup> Algerian exports to Baghdad had already reached USD 55 million earlier in the year.<sup>19</sup> The volume of trade between Morocco and Iraq stood at USD 267 million in the spring of 2001.<sup>20</sup> This was a remarkable increase from 1999 when Moroccan exports did not exceed USD 8 million.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Reuters*, 02 August 2001.

<sup>17</sup> *Al-Hayat*, 17 June 2001, p11.

<sup>18</sup> *Reuters*, 02 August 2001.

<sup>19</sup> *AFP*, 27 July 2001.

<sup>20</sup> *ArabicNews.com*, 03 April 2001.

<sup>21</sup> *ArabicNews.com*, 07 April 2000.

Moreover, Saddam's resurgent regional financial influence has not been limited to Arab countries. Turkey was also keen to restore trade with Iraq. In the course of the last couple years it has resumed flights and rail service, opened trade fairs and appointed an ambassador to Baghdad after frosty ties since the 1991 Gulf War. Iraq was Turkey's top oil supplier and fourth-largest trading partner before the war, and Turkey claims to have lost USD 30 billion in trade with Iraq because of sanctions. 151 Turkish companies and 500 Turkish businessmen were represented at a large trade fair in Iraq in the summer of 2001.<sup>22</sup> The volume of trade between the two neighbours rose to USD 2 billion in 2001 from a total of USD1.26 billion in 2000. It was expected to rise to USD 3 Billion in the following year.<sup>23</sup>

With respect to the sanctions, Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit made the following statement early in 2001: "Iraq was one of our main trade partners before the Gulf War. Turkey would favour lifting the embargo provided that controls on, checks on, military preparedness are continued but it (the sanctions regime) should not deprive us of our economic interests. Saddam is there in the position of leadership, and that's a fact we cannot change. The United States has tried to change it for several years, but to no avail."<sup>24</sup>

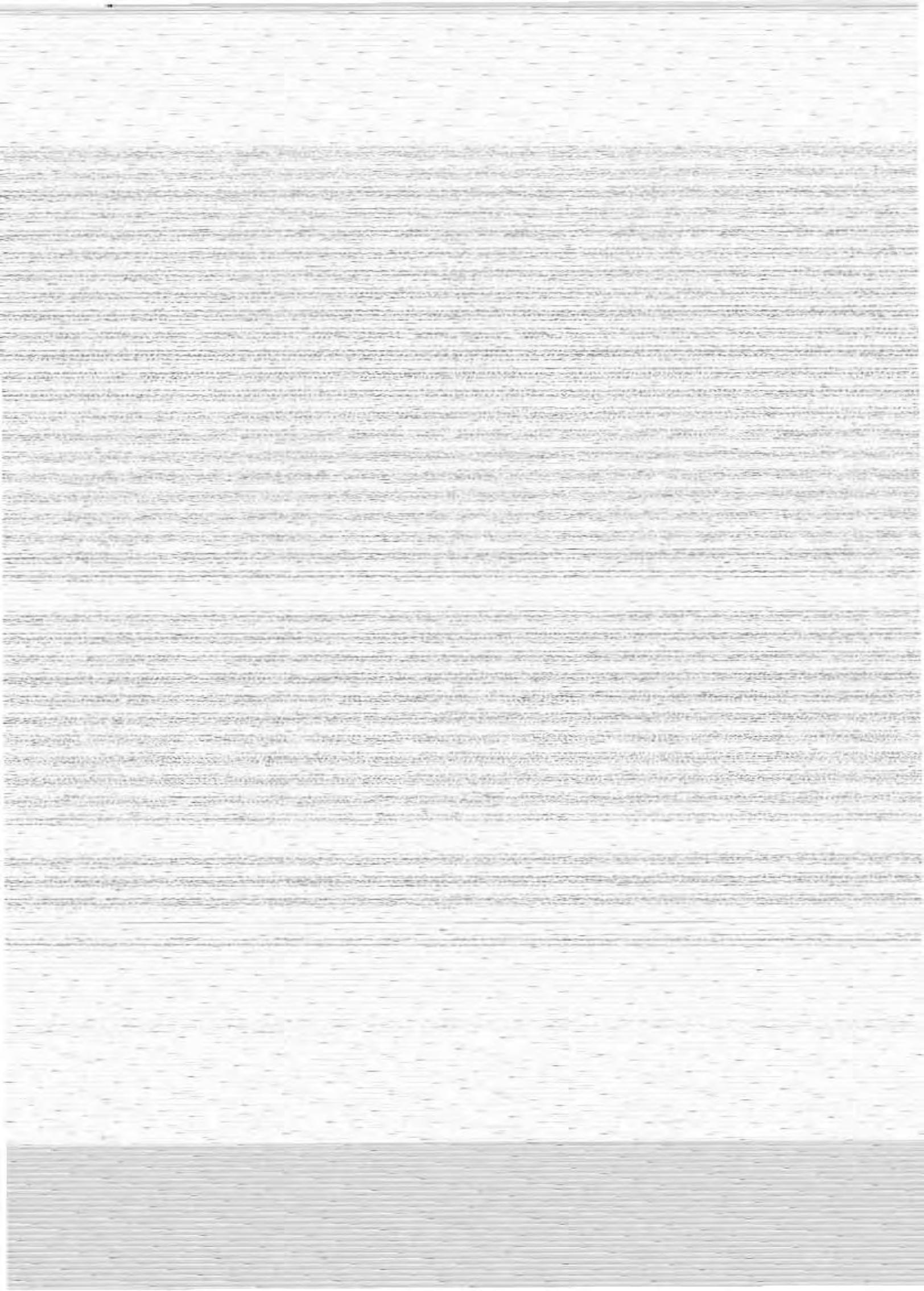
Saddam has also been regaining regional and international financial influence by less obvious means through the exploitation of Iraq's neighbours. For one thing, it is no great secret that the regime has been conducting illicit sales outside the Oil for Food programme, the proceeds of which go directly to Saddam's pocket. Furthermore, and perhaps even more importantly, Saddam has managed to build huge business empires run for him by Iraqis living in Jordan. These businesspeople are extremely influential and active in the economic, political and social life in Jordan. Over the past ten years they have successfully pursued a low-key strategy to reenergize Iraq's old business networks both in the Arab world and in Europe. As Saddam's proxies, they are equipped with all the necessary capital to test what Iraqi money can be used to buy in the international community. By making test requests to various Western and Middle Eastern companies and businesspeople they have been able to determine the willingness of such elements to sell them forbidden and sanctioned products outside the MOU, and they have found that many are

<sup>22</sup> *The Daily Star*, vol.3, no.598, 09 May 2001.

<sup>23</sup> *ArabicNews.com*, 31 July 2001.

<sup>24</sup> *The Washington Post*, 26 January 2001, page A17.







barrels per day.<sup>28</sup> According to the UN statistics, Iraq has earned, "close to USD 40 billion since the start of the United Nations Oil for Food programme."<sup>29</sup> It is worth noting that this level of production has been maintained despite the fact that Iraq's oil industry has been suffering from a shortage of spare parts created by the economic sanctions.

One implication of Iraq's wealth is that it is clearly able to pay the massive amounts of money that will be needed to reconstruct the infrastructure and restore the economy whenever economic restrictions are lifted. This has meant that projects in Iraq have been very attractive to investors and to companies interested in exploiting the Iraqi market. The country's need for imported goods extend across the economic spectrum from minor items like pencils to major purchases like airplanes. Major reconstruction is needed in virtually all-economic sectors. Consequently, international companies can presently find potentially very lucrative business opportunities in Iraq in a vast number of different areas such as: general industry; desalination; transportation; voice communications; seaports; airports; construction; consumer goods; food and beverages; clothing; consumer electronics; education; agricultural fertilisers and irrigation; cultural and environmental restoration projects; spare parts; electricity; and medicine and hospitals.

Obviously, all of this potential business has been contingent on making deals with the Iraqi government and then getting the sanctions lifted in order to take advantage of the opportunities. With respect to arranging deals, Saddam has profited by completely subordinating business policy to his political imperatives. Companies from 'friendly' countries are given priority with respect to major contracts, while companies from less helpful countries see the lion's share of opportunities in Iraq going to their competitors. As successful companies stay successful by making sure that they are not left out when there is a great deal of profit to be made, it is hardly surprising that the Iraqi policy has borne much fruit.

Ironically, before the collapse of the travel ban, one of Saddam's key mechanisms for enticing foreign companies to involve themselves in Iraq was the ostensibly humanitarian Oil for Food programme. Initially, the programme only allowed Iraq to sell oil so that it could purchase basic-needs

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<sup>28</sup> *Reuters*, 08 August 2001.

<sup>29</sup> *UN News Service*, 13 March 2001.

items like food and medicines, but it was not long before Saddam found a way to subvert it to serve his more ambitious political ends. As I have observed previously, the ongoing battle between Iraq and the UN over weapons inspections gave the Iraqi regime an ideal opportunity to make successive demands that the programme should be broadened. While the US and Britain favoured forcing Iraq to submit to the inspections with military measures like bombing raids, and did not fail to make periodic use of these, the other Security Council members preferred to attempt to resolve differences through negotiations.

Consequently, after each eruption of the dispute, the US found itself being forced by its European and Arab allies to allow the UN to broaden the scope of the Oil for Food programme. Each new amendment created new windows of opportunity within the programme's parameters. The more the business community saw new opportunities to make more money on Iraq, the more they lobbied governments for further openings and the more the Iraqi regime was able to use the programme as a means of working its way back into trade relations with the international community.

A brief examination of the way that this dynamic affected decision-making in the Netherlands serves nicely as a typical example of the kind of thing that has been going on in most of the major European countries over the past couple of years. Dutch companies were lining up, applying strong pressure on the government for negotiations and a reduction of sanctions, and it was readily apparent to the economic ministries that businesses in other countries like France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Russia and Turkey were getting profitable commercial contracts under the Oil for Food programme. It made little sense to simply stand by and let others take advantage while Dutch companies suffered. Thus, even while the foreign ministry tended to pay lip service to the line of policy preferred by the Americans, the government also supported negotiations with Iraq and the progressive expansion of the Oil for Food deal. At one point, five Dutch chambers of commerce held a joint meeting to debate the sanctions policy and to inform their eager companies about how to do business with Iraq under the programme. More than 90 companies of all types registered in the programme, and two companies set up programmes to share information about their experiences in doing business with Iraq in order to encourage and assist the other companies waiting in line.

Nobody in the business community seemed to have any particular scruples about doing business with "the butcher of Baghdad". A Dutch businessman, who wishes to remain anonymous, once said to me, "I really don't care if Hitler or Saddam rules Iraq. I have a clear task: to maximise my company's business, preferably in new markets. I am only answerable to my CEO and the shareholders, not to the foreign ministry in Washington. The sanction walls are breaking, and we should use this opportunity to get the handcuffs off of ourselves and embrace it."

The Dutch chamber of Commerce distributed a letter to Dutch companies in August 2001 encouraging them to participate that November in a two week Baghdad International Trade Fair. The letter informed companies that they had a chance to grasp important opportunities similar to those already secured by companies from other European states. The letter referred openly to Belgium, Germany, France, Russia and Italy as countries that had already benefited from re-engaging in relations with Iraq.

Russia, probably Iraq's most vocal and influential advocate in the context of the UN Security Council, has made no secret of its renewed economic interest in Iraq. As of the middle of 2001, Russian bilateral trade with Iraq stood at USD 2.5 Billion a year.<sup>30</sup> Russian companies are generally very enthusiastic about expanding their exports to Iraq with or without sanctions. Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov affirmed this, saying, "Russia has its own large economic interests in Iraq. Iraq is one of our most important partners in the Middle East." At a G8 summit in the Summer of 2001, the Russian President Vladimir Putin added his voice to those of other international leaders calling for an end to the sanctions, commenting that: "The system of sanctions against Iraq is not productive... Sanctions have failed to convince Iraq to allow international observers in."<sup>31</sup>

Russia was not the only Security Council member to take advantage of the Oil for Food programme to sign contracts in Iraq. As of last summer, French companies had signed more than USD 3 billion worth of deals since 1996.<sup>32</sup> Chinese companies were also known to have been very active pursuing business interests in Iraq.

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<sup>30</sup> *The Moscow Times.com*, 16 July 2001, page 07.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 20 July 2001.

<sup>32</sup> *International Herald Tribune*, 4 July 2001.

Since Russian, French and Chinese companies, among others, profited considerably from periodic expansions to the Oil for Food programme, one might be inclined to question the purity of these countries' motives for pursuing successive rounds of negotiations with the Iraqi regime and granting such significant concessions. Did the policy makers in these countries actually think that opening the Iraqi market to an ever greater extent would really get Saddam to cooperate with the UN weapons inspectors, or did they grant concessions because it benefited their own economies? It almost goes without saying that, now that the sanctions are effectively in tatters in any case, there are no inspectors in the country and there is practically no way to induce the Iraqi regime to allow any more inspectors in. The British newspaper *The Guardian* posed the apt question: "Who's got who in the box here?" The editorial went on to observe: "These days Saddam does not even make a pretence of co-operating with the UN, refusing to allow its weapons inspectors to return while, at the same time, finding more and more ways, with growing Russian and regional connivance, to circumvent sanctions."<sup>33</sup>

## 2. Major Energy Producers

In addition to using Iraq's massive oil wealth to attract international businesses interested in reconstruction and trade contracts, Saddam has also worked very skilfully, especially in recent years, to enlist the support of major oil companies for his attempts to bring down the sanctions regime. The world has been struggling with rising energy costs and the consequences of an economic slowdown. In this environment, the need for more oil in the market to bring prices down and satisfy the world's energy demands is ever greater.

Obviously the one industry that could never benefit from the Oil-for-Food arrangements was the oil industry. The major companies do not wish to see the Iraqi government selling oil that, under other circumstances, they could obtain the rights to for themselves. But until the restrictions are suspended, there is no real way that they can access and invest in Iraq's massive oil and natural gas reserves, and they have become more and more frustrated with the blockade as time has passed.

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<sup>33</sup> *The Guardian*, Thursday 21 September, 2000.

As I have noted previously, Russian companies have been extremely active with respect to circumventing sanctions and arranging reconstruction contracts and other business deals in Iraq. Moreover, the Russian government has been quite supportive of such activity. It is only what one would expect, therefore, that Russian oil companies have also been openly pushing for a suspension of sanctions, and working around sanctions whenever possible. "Of course we are keen to expand our reserve base abroad and Iraq for us is a good option, not only in itself but also as a platform for the region as a whole," said Dimtry Dolgov, spokesman for LUKOIL, Russia's largest oil company.<sup>34</sup> "What is wrong if Russian diplomacy benefits Russian business?" asked another high-ranking Russian oil executive commenting on the Russian government's support for company initiatives in Iraq.<sup>35</sup> As a result of such initiatives, Iraq recently promised an exclusive priority to Russian firms in some of its oil fields, including the Large Majnoon and Bin Umar fields. As of the summer of 2001, the contracts agreed amounted to approximately USD 50 billion.<sup>36</sup>

The rise of oil prices over the past couple of years has considerably strengthened the hand of both Iraq and the energy companies in most of the major oil consuming nations. This observation applies perhaps especially strongly to the US. A series of blackouts in California and a dramatic increase in gasoline prices nation-wide prior to the last general election in November 2000 led to widespread talk of a new "energy crisis". The American economy depends on massive consumption of fuel and energy, and the less reasonably affordable energy is available, the more the US is obliged to seek alternative sources of energy to provide the supplies needed. The US wants a more predictable and stable process of supply. The major oil companies have not been slow to point out that countries like Iraq and Iran which are now under US embargo are an immediate and cheaper way to provide the badly needed supplies.

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<sup>34</sup> *Reuters*, 28 April 2001.

<sup>35</sup> *The Moscow Times.com*, 16 July 2001, page 07.

<sup>36</sup> *Al-Hayat*, 04 August 2001.

In a lecture to the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies in Washington last year, Mr. Lucio A. Noto from the Mobil Oil Company nicely articulated the stance of most of the major oil companies in the following comments:<sup>37</sup>

From the narrow perspective of the energy industry, and from the broader perspective of US national interest, unilateral sanctions are a failure. You would think that the US government would encourage globalisation, free trade, and transfer of goodwill across boundaries. My business cannot thrive unless there is a free flow of money, products, people, and ideas. In the past, the US was often the only game in town. If there were US economic sanctions against you, you were in big trouble. Today, countries around the world have access to other markets. They have access to other sources of funds. They have access to technology from many sources. Why do we think that somehow the US is special, that we can impose what we want on others and that we will be effective in doing it? We end up putting sanctions on countries in a way that hurts the wrong people. We remove ourselves from the process of change, from being able to be a catalyst of constructive movement in other countries. And, we disadvantage US companies... Every year, the world uses roughly 75 million barrels a day of oil and gas. We have to replace it. We have to make sure that our children have access to clean, efficient energy. Therefore I'm going to have to live in places that most people in Washington wish were never put on a map. But they exist and they're important to us, and to the free world. I'm ready to take risks to find new sources of energy, but sanctions have the effect of tying one hand behind my back. They disadvantage Mobil competitively... I have a rather emotional view of sanctions. Forgive me for that, but I think this is a bread and butter issue for America: not just for Mobil, and not just for the oil industry, but for the whole of America.

A Washington based energy consulting firm (Washington Policy & Analysis Inc [WPA]) confirmed the importance of a sanctions-free Iraq, Libya and Iran in a study released in June this year. According to that study: "Removing US and international economic sanctions against Iran, Libya and Iraq would

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<sup>37</sup>"Rethinking Sanctions" a lecture by Lucio A. Noto, at The Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 2001.

lower oil prices and increase global crude supplies by 3.5 million barrels per day (bpd) over the next three years” The study predicts that, “Iraq’s oil output would climb from its current 2.7 million bpd to 4 million bpd if sanctions are lifted”<sup>38</sup>

It is clear that the message from the oil companies and think tanks has been received and accepted at the highest levels of the American political establishment. President Bush, Vice President Cheney and many of the administration’s most important officials and advisors have an oil industry background. Particularly given present concerns about energy, it is no surprise to see that increasing oil production, both domestically and internationally, has been a very high priority since the Republicans returned to the White House in 2001. Cheney, who was chief executive of the American Oil Company Halliburton before joining Bush election campaign, headed an energy task force in April 2001 which openly recommended ending economic sanctions, “against Iran, Libya and Iraq as part of a plan to increase America’s oil supply”. Realising the importance of these countries with respect to the world oil supply, the energy task force acknowledged that extant sanctions, “affect some of the most important existing and prospective petroleum producing countries in the world.” The task force report went on to indicate, “The administration will initiate a comprehensive sanctions review and seek to engage the Congress in a partnership for sanctions reform.”<sup>39</sup>

The importance of Iraqi oil to the US economy was further highlighted in the summer of 2001. When Iraq threatened to suspend its oil exports as part of its ongoing brinkmanship vis a vis the UN, “crude oil prices pushed up towards \$30 per barrel...”<sup>40</sup> when OPEC cut oil production the following month, President Bush commented, “The US economy is bumping along right now and a run-up of energy prices would hurt.”<sup>41</sup> A news report around the same time claimed that American oil suppliers are already buying 90% of Iraq’s oil exports, which, if true, would make the US the foremost customer of one of its most despised enemies.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Reuters, 30 June 2001.

<sup>39</sup>*The Washington Post*, 19 April 2001, page A13.

<sup>40</sup>*Telegraph*, 12 June 2001.

<sup>41</sup>*BBC News*, 25 July 2001.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Trading With the Enemy: US Refiners Reportedly Buying Most of Iraq’s Oil’ *ABC News*, 20 July 2001.

Still, in the aftermath of September 11th, it seems clear that the US is more determined than ever to prevent a total suspension of sanctions, unless, of course, it is somehow able to circumvent the need by removing Saddam from power in Iraq. As I have noted previously, international and regional support for some kind of military action is extremely unlikely as the situation stands. Whether or not the US will be able to persuade the other members of the Security Council to go along with its smart sanctions plan remains to be seen. However, given the compelling economic interests at stake, not only in Russia, France, China, etc., but also within America itself, there seems to be every possibility that Saddam's demand for a total suspension will ultimately prevail.

### *Conclusion*

In the early 1990s, the UN Security Council, with the support of a broad international consensus, subjected Iraq to a comprehensive set of economic sanctions which were set to remain in place for an indefinite period of time. This sanctions regime was intended to force Saddam Hussein and his government out of power, or failing that, to prevent them from exercising any kind of significant regional and international influence.

Now, just over a decade later, the blanket sanctions policy has all but collapsed, and although Saddam's regime continues to be widely condemned for its brutality and aggressive posturing, his demands for a total suspension of all sanctions have received widespread support internationally. In the meantime, the US, still Saddam's chief international opponent, has been unable to raise much support for either a revised set of "smart" sanctions or a new military campaign to deal with Saddam once and for all.

Over the course of this paper, I have argued that a number of different factors and processes have contributed to the failure of the sanctions and the current reluctance of the international community to endorse any new action against Iraq, or even the persistence of a strictly limited framework of sanctions.

With respect to Iraq's Arab neighbours, I asserted that humanitarian, security, ideological and economic imperatives have all played an important role. The terrible suffering of the Iraqi people has been impossible for the Arab masses or their leaders to ignore. At the same time, the substantial collapse of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, and America's failure to respond to Arab concerns about perceived Israeli militancy, has caused the Arab states to distance themselves from the US and its policy preferences. Instead, they have begun to pull closer together, strategically and economically. Iraq, due to Saddam's popular standing with respect to Arab nationalist issues and the country's still formidable economic might, has been increasingly incorporated into this process.

Outside the region, with reference to Russia, France, China and other influential countries, I conceded that humanitarian concerns have also been important, but proceeded to strongly argue that the primary factors for these states have been the impact of Globalisation, increasing pressure from business interests and the Iraqi regime's astute management of these forces. Saddam's masterful exploitation of the Oil for Food programme, combined with Iraq's resource wealth and its overwhelming need for reconstruction, allowed him to attract a host of international businesses to negotiate lucrative business contracts. Naturally, the sanctions must be suspended before these ventures can go ahead, and the businesses involved have therefore been lobbying vigorously and successfully to persuade their governments to work for a change in the sanctions policy. The major energy companies have also been pushing hard for a suspension of sanctions so they can gain access to Iraq's massive reserves of oil and natural gas. The recent rises in world fuel prices and the global economic turndown have created an environment in which even the US has been forced to seriously consider suspending most, if not all, of the current sanctions.

As Mr. Noto's comments in the third section of the paper strongly suggest, the world business community would reject the charge that its growing opposition to the sanctions has been based on nothing more than simple desire for profit. There now seems to be a philosophical consensus among business interests, and those elements in world governments which support them, that the sanctions represent a policy founded on a false assumption that isolation and punishment are the best ways to influence a country to change its behaviour. In essence, the elements that have been pushing so strongly for a suspension of sanctions are proposing that the best way to get the Iraqi regime to respect the concerns of the international community is to pursue a

policy of constructive engagement which gives the regime a real stake in doing so.

Such arguments have raised questions and stirred up debate worldwide about the logic behind continuing sanctions and about the ultimate utility of the American containment policy. Of course, the only way to test the validity of this line of argument is to let Saddam back into the international fold and see how he behaves. In retrospect, the comprehensive sanctions policy can certainly be seen as a failure with a terrible human cost, but it will perhaps be another decade or even longer before anyone can really assess the implications, for better or worse, of the alternative policy that the international community now seems so eager to embrace.

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