Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs

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Bipolar Iraq

On 23 November the European Policy Centre held a policy dialogue on Development, Democracy and Human Security: the challenge in Iraq. Participants included an Iraqi Programme manager, working for Norwegian Peoples Aid in Iraq, representatives of the European Commission and the Council of Ministers.

We appeared to be presented with a tale of two Iraqs. Oddly enough, these mirrored the competing Iraqs we see in the media. The first Iraqi tale is a poignant yarn, of a troubled and ancient land harshly ruled by patriarchy and totalitarianism for over 3000 years. A land whose current borders were arbitrarily pencilled into reality by arrogant European imperialists, a land characterised by murderous anarchy, inter-ethnic conflict and chronic insecurity, a land in which roughly 66 people are brutally murdered every day.

Our second Iraq was one of hope, youth and vitality. An Iraq which, despite its multi-ethnic and multi-faith make-up, has forged a common national, proud, Iraqi identity, an Iraq that recently enjoyed its first ever democratic elections, an Iraq which is building a new civil society, empowering women and educating its future leaders in the culture of human rights.

The first casualty of war is always the truth. These polarized narratives of recent Iraqi history are the natural culmination of the propaganda war; the attempts to convince us that one side is right or wrong; that one side is winning or losing. These are fairy tales for adults.

Fairy tales provide no basis for practical solutions or reconciliation. The real Iraqi truth can be found within, without and beyond these two narratives. It is far more complicated than they would suggest. Former US Defence Secretary Robert McNamara described the 'fog of war' as the incomprehensible number of variables, drivers and processes involved in conflict. The 'fog,' or the confusion, is a product of the inability of the human mind to comprehend, anticipate and observe all factors and processes involved. In other words, it is unlikely that any one partisan perspective could offer all the answers for a place like Iraq. Perhaps the most realistic starting point would be admitting the immense complexities of the situation, and the limitations of the human mind in dealing with them.

The failure of Coalition strategy in Iraq is now glaringly clear. By the time *Around Europe* goes to print, two different US Government investigations into its Iraq strategy will have offered a series of recommendations to the executive. These have already been widely leaked, and include scaling down US troop numbers by early 2008 to a more supportive role, and including Iran and Syria in talks on stabilising their neighbour. At all levels of US and international society, serious questions are being raised.

Finding a successful conclusion to the Iraqi conflict also raises questions for Friends in Europe. Because Quakers believe that there is that of God in everyone, this makes the idea of using violence totally unacceptable. Yet at times it has been (and still is) argued that in certain circumstances the threat of violence – or superior armed force - is necessary to keep the peace. We must ask ourselves: is the presence of Coalition troops preventing civil war on an even greater scale in Iraq? Some would argue that it is, but there is no clear evidence for this assertion. We recognise that our world is far from perfect and far from being 'the peace, love, and unity' which we (in the words of Margaret Fell*) strive for. The reality of how people solve human problems is often more an intellectual

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exercise than a spiritual approach. Yet this does not mean we should ignore the experience, feelings and knowledge that stem from our connection with the divine.

Is it ever necessary to employ 'ungodly means' to reach sacred ends? As a society, it may be necessary to look more closely at how we translate our spiritual insights into the world around us. William Penn said 'a good end cannot sanctify evil means, nor must we ever do evil, that good may come of it…It is a great presumption to send our passions upon God's errands, as it is to palliate them with God's name…'**

Bypassing the mind in decision making is acting on 'blind faith'. Ignoring the soul risks a Machiavellian approach that can be destructive. Yet these are, of course, bipolar extremes. Like our histories of Iraq, perhaps the answer lies in further exploration and ultimately, balance.

Around Europe readers may know that the European Commission is the third largest donor to Iraq. The EU also trains Iraqi investigators and judges and Member States of the EU are providing training to Iraqi and other army units in the Middle East. According to the Council representative at the policy briefing, all EU instruments to help Iraq are designed to 'boost Iraqi capacity.' The EU gave 200 million Euros over the last 3 years in development aid to Iraq.

Is it not then imperative for the EU, as an aid donor, to ask some serious questions, to take more ownership of the programmes that are funded, to acknowledge that the EU alone cannot understand all Iraq's problems? Should the EU not play a greater role, offering more time and resources to finding, jointly with Iraqis and others, an appropriate solution to these complex problems?

Grass roots peace work is often seen as the answer for those who reject violence. Educate, empower, encourage and facilitate. Yet such peace work can be extremely dangerous and at time ineffective if undertaken in such hostile environments. Only a small number of peace workers dare travel where they are totally unprotected. The UN compound in Iraq was attacked in 2003. It packed its bags and departed. Only the bravest of Western NGOs are operating in Iraq.

For ordinary Iraqis, it is likely that freedom from the fear of obliteration is the greatest freedom they currently desire. Could the international community provide such security and balance through a civilian, entirely non-violent approach?

*Margaret Fell: one of the early founders of Quakerism in England in the 17th century
** William Penn, quoted in Quaker Faith and Practice, section 24.03, Britain Yearly Meeting, 1994

Matthew Taylor

Sophie Miller joins QCEA

I am half English, half American, and have grown up in Massachusetts. I recently graduated from McGill University in Montreal, where I studied History and Humanistic Studies, an interdisciplinary degree in which I focused on Global Politics and World Religions. Since leaving McGill, I have been working as a research assistant on gender-based violence in the Great Lakes region of Africa, as well as collaborating with the American Friends Service Committee on their regional counter-recruitment programme. I am interested in social justice in all its forms and am passionate about environmental issues.

My involvement with the Religious Society of Friends has been indirect, yet significant. My father was a conscientious objector and non-violent resister during the Vietnam War and he worked extensively with Quakers on both projects. Growing up, the values of social justice, peace, respect for each individual and giving back to the greater community were ever-present in our household. As I have gotten older I have come to realize that I was raised on Quaker values!

I am very much looking forward to becoming acquainted with Brussels and to working with QCEA. I know it will be a wonderful experience.

Sophie Miller

"One voice on energy:" European energy security

Following on from the Commission's Green Paper on Energy released in March 2006, the European Commission held a conference from 20-21 November entitled 'Towards an EU External Energy Policy to assure a high level of supply security.' With growing global concerns about depleting oil and gas supplies and evidence of climate change beginning to show, the security of European energy is becoming an increasingly crucial topic. Of course, the European Union first began as a trading partnership, as a European Coal and Steel Community and, once again, Europe is looking to trading partnerships to ensure its future energy security.

The EU is the world's largest importer of energy and the second largest consumer. In other words, it is highly dependent on energy from non-European sources. As energy prices are set to increase and the threat of climate change demands a diversification of fuels, steps need to be taken quickly to ensure that Europeans can continue to receive the energy supply they need in the most environmentally sustainable way possible. The November black-out across Europe only reinforced the reality that Europe needs to secure its energy supplies. Commission President José Manuel Barroso emphasised the need for Europe to speak with one voice on energy, but he was also clear that relationships need to be strengthened with external partners as well. Internal and external energy policies need to be considered alongside each other; they are inseparable.

Barroso explained that there would be four main pillars to Commission policy on energy. Firstly, the creation of a single European market is crucial. With regard to internal policy, as High Representative Javier Solana commented, although there is a European single market on paper, this still needs to be put into practice. Secondly, the improvement of energy efficiency will be a priority. The Commission has produced an Energy Efficiency Action plan detailing 10 priority actions to reduce energy consumption by 20% by 2020. This will help to strengthen European competitiveness, could save the average household between •200 and •1000 a year and would also help to reduce $C0_2$ emissions by 780 million tonnes. The third pillar is to substantially increase the amount of energy used from renewable and low carbon sources. However Barroso was clear that whether or not to employ nuclear energy is a decision for Member States, not the Commission. The final pillar is the development of new technologies.

Although the four pillars all seem very sensible propositions, there are some important challenges to bear in mind. It was generally agreed that a diversity of energy sources and suppliers is crucial to European energy security. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, said that, through the European Neighbourhood Policy and Partnership Agreements, a new European Neighbourhood investment fund would finance important new energy projects. She emphasised that Russia is a key strategic partner for energy but that in November 2007 the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Russia and the EU will end. Discussions are currently underway to decide what should be in the new agreement and, of course, energy is expected to feature heavily in it. Memorandums of understanding have been signed with the Ukraine, Moldova, and Azerbaijan and future cooperation with countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and the Caspian, Black Sea and Mediterranean regions are also being explored. However, in order to increase European competitiveness in the energy markets, the EU will also be investing in infrastructure such as PEOP (the Pan European Oil Pipeline Project, a pipeline for transporting oil from the Caspian Sea region to Western Europe via the Black Sea) and Nabucco (3300 km of pipeline that will guarantee the supply from Iran to Central Europe).

How the EU will remain competitive, in keeping with the Lisbon Strategy, when it is and will continue to be so dependent on foreign imports is a real concern. However, as UK Commissioner Peter Mandelson "we cannot allow energy to become a geopolitical bargaining chip". This statement is important to remember when looking at potential trade partnerships. Another major concern worth noting is the inevitable cross-over between foreign policy and trade policy. High Representative Solana highlighted this concern by asking to what extent Europe's energy concerns would influence its foreign policy, both in terms of choice of trading partners and interventions in conflict areas.

Foreign policy in terms of development is also an important issue to bear in mind. Africa has the second largest oil reserves in the world and, as many speakers agreed, the so-called 'resource curse' should be a 'resource opportunity'. The role of the EU through energy trade agreements and future European Development funding could be important ways of helping to strengthen the African economies.

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For any development however, as all the African representatives emphasised, the continent needs investment. Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs agreed that there is huge potential for investment in renewable energies in Africa but that currently it is the most dependent continent on oil.

Of course, diversification is not only important for energy security but also for environmental sustainability. The conference made it very clear that there can be no European energy policy, internal or external, independent of environmental sustainability. The International Energy Agency forecasts that CO_2 emissions will rise by 55% by 2030. At present the EU accounts for around 14% of global greenhouse emissions but this could fall to 8% by 2050 while those of developing countries will expand to over 50%. President Barroso agreed that it is important to remember that this is 'global warming' not 'European warming.' This is not something on which Europe can act alone. He said that the EU also needs to form international partnerships to work on specific projects to combat climate change.

Energy security is going to be the hot topic for every EU summit in 2007 and is certainly an issue we will be hearing more about. Indeed, since the conference, the European Council has endorsed the setting up of a network of energy security correspondents in early 2007. This network will be a tool for collecting and analysing existing geopolitical and energy related information. It should also serve as an early warning tool to support the EU's overall strategy of ensuring the security of energy supply.

Sarah Barnett

Addendum: No. 287 November 2006 edition of *Around Europe* featured a picture of Robin Brookes at the Eleventh International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns in Woltersdorf. The picture was kindly provided by Friedrich Heilmann and other conference pictures are available from www.peacetax-2006.com

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