Security Council, PRAMUN 2017
Synopsis

Topic #3: The situation concerning Iraq

I. Background Information

In recent years, Iraq has been ravaged by cycles of warfare, a growing refugee crisis, crippling sectarianism, and the violent spread of the Islamic State extremist movement (also known as ISIS, ISIL or by its Arabic acronym, Daesh). In the past decade, Iraqis have made some progress in building their government, like approving a constitution to replace that of the Saddam Hussein era, and holding elections for parliament and provincial governments. Still, governing institutions remain weak, and corruption and poverty endemic.[1]

Iraq's current government is a dysfunctional coalition of Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish leaders. It is now dominated by the Shiite Arab majority (about 60% of the population) and many Sunni Arabs, who formed the backbone of Saddam Hussein's regime, feel marginalized.

While Kurdish leaders do participate in the central state institutions in Baghdad, they do as they please in their autonomous entity in the Kurdish north.[2] The Kurds are at odds with the central government over the division of oil profits and the final status of mixed Arab-Kurdish territories.

There is still no consensus on what the post-Saddam Iraq should look like. Most Kurds advocate a federal state (and many wouldn't mind seceding from the Arabs altogether if given a chance), joined by some Sunnis who want autonomy from the Shiite-led central government. Many Shiite politicians living in oil-rich provinces could also live without the interference from Baghdad. On the other side of the debate are the nationalists, both Sunni and Shiites, who advocate a unified Iraq with a strong central government.

Al Qaeda-linked Sunni extremists continue with regular attacks against government targets and Shiites. The potential for economic development is huge, but violence remains omnipresent, and many Iraqis fear a possible partition of the country.[3]
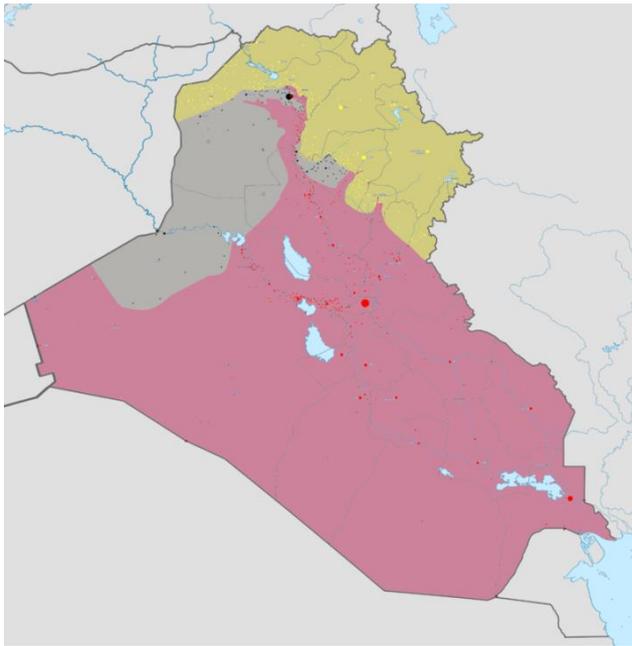
In 2014, the Iraqi insurgency escalated into a civil war with the conquest of Fallujah and Mosul and major areas in northern Iraq by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, or ISIS). The result of which has been the forced resignation of the Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, airstrikes by the United States, Iran, Syria, and others and military aid provided to Iraq by Russia.[4]

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[1] http://www.usip.org/publications/the-current-situation-in-iraq
[2] http://middleeast.about.com/od/ira1/tp/Current-Situation-In-Iraq.htm
[3] http://middleeast.about.com/od/ira1/tp/Current-Situation-In-Iraq.htm
[4] http://www.slate.com/blogs/business_insider/2014/08/08/who_else_besides_americans_are_flying_fighter_jets_in_iraq.html

Current territorial situation in Iraq as of 22.11.2016

II. United Nations Involvement

Because the UN Security Council refused to endorse the US-UK invasion and occupation of Iraq in March 2003, Washington and London hoped to ignore the UN and operate with a free hand in the country. But a fierce Iraqi resistance, persistent economic and political problems, and continuing international criticism forced the US-UK to seek international partners, including assistance from the UN. A debate ensued between those who thought that the UN could be the wedge for internationalization and US-UK withdrawal and those who thought a UN presence would only discredit the world body. Following the adoption of a Security Council Resolution[5] two months after the war, then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appointed a Special Representative for Iraq and the UN assumed some small responsibilities there. Many critics warned, though, that the UN should not be identified with the illegal war and occupation.[6]

In August 2003, a massive bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad confirmed the critics' fears, killing fifteen UN staff including the Special Representative.[7] The UN then pulled out of Iraq and kept its distance, but in February 2004, under heavy US pressure, the UN agreed to send a mission to the country, to help construct a new interim government. Again, Washington kept the UN's political role weak, while seeking legitimacy from the UN. After the establishment of an interim government in June, the US pressured the UN to take a larger role in planning national elections, but security dangers and reluctance by the Secretary General and UN staff kept the UN role to a minimum.[8]

Washington is cited the worsening humanitarian crisis as reason enough for the UN to step in. But critics said the US intended to use the UN to push Iraqis to accept US-imposed "benchmarks" for reconciliation, including a controversial oil law. The new Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, seemed to be more pliant to the US and more supportive of greater UN involvement in Iraq. Despite strong opposition from the UN Staff Council – which represents 25,000 UN workers – the Security Council succumbed to US and UK pressure and voted on August 10, 2007 to expand the UN's role in Iraq.[9]

This resolution mainly expanded the role of political missions like The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), which was established by the 2003 UN Security Council at the request of the Government of Iraq in 2003. [10] UNAMI is mandated to advise and assist the Government and people of Iraq on a number of fronts. This includes advancing inclusive, political dialogue and national reconciliation, assisting in the electoral process and in the planning for a national census, facilitating regional dialogue between Iraq and its neighbours, and promoting the protection of human rights and judicial and legal reform.[11]

III. Bloc Positions and Possible Solutions

China and Russia firmly believe that other countries' sovereingty should not be interfered with and therefore generally oppose any sort of action in Iraq directed at other targets than ISIL, especially the Iraqi government.

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[5] http://www.unesco.org/culture/laws/pdf/resolution1483_iraq_en.pdf
[6] https://www.globalpolicy.org/political-issues-in-iraq/un-role-in-iraq.html
[7] http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31770#.WDwVDfkrI2w
[8] https://www.globalpolicy.org/political-issues-in-iraq/un-role-in-iraq.html
[9] http://www.un.org/press/en/2007/sc9095.doc.htm
[10] http://www.un.org/press/en/2003/sc7843.doc.htm
[11] http://www.uniraq.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=1024&Itemid=636&lang=en

Another bloc with a firm stance on the subject are other muslim-majority countries. But they are gravely divided just like Iraq. The Shia-majority nations like Iran support the current Shia government, trying to restore Iraq to its pre-war state. Sunni-majority countries believe the Shia government badly represents countries with a sizable Sunni minority and would like to see a different form of government favouring them more.

To countries with sizable Kurdish majorities outside Iraq, like Turkey or Syria, it is unacceptable that an independent Kurdish nation state were to be created.

Western countries would like to restore rule of law and democracy to the area, but with unequal domestic support, they have limited space to manoeuvre.

IV. Sources and Useful Links

United States Institute for Peace – Current situation in Iraq
http://www.usip.org/publications/the-current-situation-in-iraq

About News – Current situation in Iraq
http://middleeast.about.com/od/ira1/tp/Current-Situation-In-Iraq.htm

UN in Iraq Press Releases
http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&layout=category&task=category&id=110&Itemid=605&lang=en

UN High Commissioner for Refugees – Iraq's displacement crisis
http://www.unhcr.org/543d10119.html

Relevant and interesting articles that are worth reading / videos to watch
(not to be cited as Policy Paper sources, as the sources are usually biased):

Vox – Syria's war: Who is fighting and why
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKb9GVU8bHE

Vice – The Battle for Iraq: Shia Militias vs. the ISIS
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pEZcCJIKkg

Vice – Peshmerga vs. the Islamic State: The Road to Mosul
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbsesrAMjTw

What if Middle East Borders were redrawn?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Td-7bl9jp8