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Dilemmas of Post-war Reconstruction in Iraq

by *Michael Brzoska*

Few recent wars have engendered as much discussion about post-war political and economic reconstruction as the one this year against Iraq. The Iraq crisis is a test case and potentially sets the precedence in a number of core issues of international relations such as the role of the United Nations, US superpower politics, and international law. One such issue is who is to do what in post-war reconstruction. When it started the war, the US government stated that it, and not the UN, would determine post-victory politics in Iraq and that it would also provide for a large share of humanitarian aid and the costs of reconstruction. However, it is likely that the United Nations will indeed have a major role in administering post-war Iraq—albeit under strong US influence—and that states other than the United States will bear a large share of the reconstruction responsibilities and costs. One reason for this likely outcome is the lack of realism in the assumptions made by influential decision-makers in the US administration underlying the decision to go to war. Another is the strong incentive on the part of the international community of states not to let the military victors alone determine the fate of Iraq. However, while the objective of a broader international foundation for reconstruction is laudable, it nevertheless poses a dilemma for those governments who opposed the war against Iraq in that the US administration may be led to believe that the outcome would be the same in other possible cases of US-led military action such as North Korea or Iran, the other two countries named by President Bush in January 2002 as members of his so-called ‘axis of evil’.

There are, therefore, two major debates, the first on political institutions. Within the Department of Defense, the US government has created the ‘Office for

Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance’ to run post-victory Iraq. It has named the former Army Major General James Garner, the president of a US defense producer, to head a post-war military government in that country. Garner is to hand over power to a civilian Iraqi government after as brief a period as possible, at the maximum a few months, but it is questionable whether things will go this quick. Other governments—including the United Kingdom—favor different models: either a UN administration, as in Kosovo or East Timor, or a national government with strong UN support, modeled on the case of Afghanistan. The reason is that these governments want to bring the handling of the Iraq crisis back into the fold of multilateralism as quickly as possible.

It is likely that the US government will yield to such international pressure earlier rather than later. The US government’s plans for post-victory Iraq have been built on the unrealistic assumption that the establishment of

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liberal democracy in Iraq by war and occupation will be the ‘silver bullet’ to peaceful political transition. Experts on the history and current political landscape of Iraq express

strong doubts. In addition, the history of recent foreign military interventions is full of examples of the obstacles against establishing effective democracies, ranging from Haiti to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Afghanistan. And to go a bit further back in history, there are many cases of post-colonial failures of the introduction of democracy by decree or force. Particularly in Great Britain, with its colonial history, one would expect more skepticism about the prospects of the establishment of liberal democracy as an omnipotent problem-solver. Germany and Japan are often cited as models for Iraq; but these countries had fairly homogenous populations and still it took many years before national civilian governments were allowed to steer the course of these countries again. At the latest, once difficulties in running Iraq become costly, the US government will seek to increase the role of the UN. In the US Congress, it has historically always been easier to

acquire funding for war than for post-war activities. It is hard to see why this should be different in the case of Iraq.

Skepticism about the willingness of the US Congress to fund reconstruction is also a major consideration in the other debate: the cost of humanitarian assistance and reconstruction. At the time of writing, the intervention governments were optimistic about meeting these costs out of Iraqi oil revenues, their own budgets, and a certain amount of support from other governments. Again, however, these assumptions about costs are unrealistic. Prior to the war, the Iraqi economy was in bad shape which is in turn leading to additional destruction. Requirements are large. Substantial support is likely to come forward from a large number of donors. Even those who opposed the war will feel the obligation to help the Iraqi people who have suffered so much already.

A strong role for the United Nations in post-war Iraq, and comprehensive aid for the Iraqi population would be welcome developments. However, such post-war support for Iraq should come with two clear messages: Firstly, post-war support does not constitute an ex-post endorsement by the broader international community of states of the decision to go to war with Iraq; the objective is to help the Iraqi people. Secondly, opposition against similar examples of such brinkmanship in the future will be even stronger than in the case of Iraq.

Dr Michael Brzoska is Head of the Research Department at the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC).

Staff Spotlight:



**Katharina
Moraht**

Katharina Moraht (Germany) joined BICC in 1999 as a student assistant in the research department. After completing her MA in sociology, psychology and Spanish at Bonn University in 2001, she worked for a while at another company in order to gain more work experience. In April 2002 she returned to BICC to join the Communication & Organization department where she substitutes her former colleague Svenja Bends during her maternity leave.

Besides general PR-work, such as organizing press conferences and other events and doing the press clippings, Katharina is responsible for the management of BICC's publication series, including its briefs, bulletins and papers, for which she also does the layout. One of her biggest tasks is the publishing and layout coordination of BICC's yearly conversion survey. She acts as a liaison between the research department and the layout company, checks and corrects the proofs, as well as being responsible for other publishing management tasks. Together with BICC's spokesperson Susanne Heinke, she came up with the idea of creating a new layout for this year's conversion survey—a task that satisfied her creative ambitions. In addition, she contributes to the public presentation of BICC. She is involved in the re-designing of the BICC website and creates flyers and posters whenever needed. She is also one of the persons responsible for BICC's e-newsletter which was first distributed last August and for which she compiles the content and writes notes.

Although originally from Hamburg, Katharina likes living in the Rhineland. Whenever she finds time she loves to travel and enjoys taking photos. She is currently pursuing a Dutch course to add to her language skills. She also cherishes staying at home with her cat and friends or doing gardening work on her balcony.

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Capacity Building for Disarmament Initiatives in North Korea

The project *Capacity Building for Disarmament Initiatives in North Korea*—assisted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)—is aimed at providing support to the researchers of the Disarmament and Peace Institute (DPI) and other officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea in broadening knowledge in specific fields of disarmament and peace. The project commenced in 2002 and will be concluded at the end of 2003. It follows up and builds upon previous assistance provided in this area through an earlier UNDP project. This capacity-building exercise consists of several components:

- *Fellowships:* Two fellows have spent five weeks at UNIDIR in Geneva to observe the Conference on Disarmament (CD) sessions and study of the history of the CD and its present program. In addition they researched issues of the prevention of arms race in outer space (PAROS) and confidence building measures, as well as general disarmament research in the facilities of UNIDIR. Two other fellows worked for almost one month at SIPRI in Stockholm on confidence building measures and received training in research methodology. At least three more fellows are planned to come as guest researchers to SIPRI and BICC in the course of this year.
- *Study tour:* Three experts will visit four to five European institutes specialized in disarmament, arms control, security, peace and conversion research and policies in mid 2003.
- *Acquisition of library material:* A publication exchange on behalf of DPI has been organized with almost 20 institutions specialized in arms control issues.

During a first mission of Prof. Dr. Herbert Wulf (BICC) who acts as Chief Technical Advisor to UNDP and Mr. Shannon Kile (SIPRI) to Pyongyang in August 2002 a detailed work plan was agreed between the partners. At the end of the program an independent evaluation will look at the outcome of this exercise. Of course, especially in this period of tensions between North Korea and the international community it is important to engage the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pyongyang in a constructive dialogue.

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Monitoring Afghan Security Sector Reform

On 3 April 2002, major international donors met at Geneva to discuss strategies to address the security vacuum that emerged in Afghanistan following the fall of the Taliban. They proceeded to set an agenda for an internationally supported security sector reform process consisting of five pillars: Military Reform; Police Reform; Judicial Reform; Counter-Narcotics; and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants (DDR). Two months later, in June 2002, the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) established a project to monitor progress on each of the pillars of this security sector reform process.

BICC demonstrated its expertise in this field through a paper published in October 2002 entitled *Challenging the Warlord Culture: Security Sector Reform in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*. The report described security conditions in Afghanistan, including factors that exacerbated them, and critically assessed the progress made in the planning and implementation of reform programs.

BICC researchers have been involved in two field missions to Afghanistan and have presented their research at several international fora assembling Afghan and international stakeholders and observers. The Institute's Afghanistan experts regularly contribute and influence the ongoing international debate on post-war Afghanistan through the publication of articles and policy papers in various internet and print publications.

From **4–11 June 2003**, BICC will hold an **e-conference** entitled: *Assessing the Progress of Security Sector Reform One Year after the Geneva Conference*. With the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorating rapidly and international attention shifting to the war on Iraq, BICC seeks to refocus attention on the Afghan security sector reform process, infusing it with new momentum. The conference will assemble experts and stakeholders to analyze and discuss three prominent aspects of security sector reform: Military Reform, Police Reform, and DDR. Participation in the conference, which will take place on an Internet discussion board, will be open to the general public. If you are interested in participating, please register at the conference web site at www.bicc.de/forum or send an e-mail with your full name, profession, and organization to afghanistan-conference@bicc.de. The results of the conference, including any policy recommendations that result from it, will be published by BICC as a report in the summer of 2003.

For further information please contact

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BICC Publications

In addition to its annual *conversion survey*, the BICC publishes *disarmament and conversion studies* and other books, BICC publishes *reports, briefs, and papers*. These series analyze the international conversion process, report on conversion projects and experience gained, and offer scientific as well as practical know-how. Further details can be obtained at www.bicc.de/publications/.

Brief 26:

Andreas Heinemann-Grüder, *Becoming an Ex-military Man: Demobilization and Reintegration of Military Professionals in Eastern Europe*, October 2002

Paper 26:

Jocelyn Mawdsley, *The Gap between Rhetoric and Reality: Weapons Acquisition and ESDP*, December 2002

Paper 27:

João Gomes Porto and Imogen Parsons, *Sustaining the Peace in Angola: An Overview of Current Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration*, March 2003

Forthcoming:

BICC 2003. *Conversion Survey 2003: Global Disarmament, Demilitarization and Demobilization*. Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, Germany, May.

BICC Notes

Ambassador Dr. Theodor Winkler and Mr. Marc Remillard from DCAF (Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces) visited BICC on 5 March 2003. During this visit, a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** was signed between DCAF and BICC. While DCAF has gained substantial expertise in the area of reform, as well as civilian and parliamentary oversight of the security sector, BICC has accumulated similar expertise in the field of conversion, demobilization and many related areas. Both organizations feel that their activities are complementary and have therefore decided to strengthen their cooperation in the future.

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BICC and the **Colombian Foundation 'Ideas para la Paz'**, which has close links to the Universidad des los Andes, have decided to cooperate on crisis prevention and conflict management in Colombia, with a special focus on demobilization. Following Peter Croll's trip to Colombia last year and the return visit of the Executive Director of the Foundation Ideas para la Paz, Dr. Arturo Garcia to Bonn on 31 March 2003, BICC has agreed to assist the Foundation in organizing a seminar on these issues with Colombian policymakers.

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On 5 May 2003, Prof. Dr. Erhard Geißler will present his latest book **Anthrax und das Versagen der Geheimdienste** (Anthrax and the Failure of the Intelligence Services) at BICC. Prof. Dr. Ernst Ulrich von Weizäcker MdB (Member of the German Parliament) will give an introduction to the issue. The event, which starts at 11.00h, is open to the public.

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On 4 June 2003, the **Annual German Peace Report Friedensgutachten 2003** will go public and will be presented, for the first time, to the President of the German Parliament Wolfgang Thierse. The report, which is published jointly by the five major German peace research institutes with BICC adopting the editorial lead this year, analyzes the substantive shifts in international affairs from cooperation to confrontation in the context of the Iraq war and beyond and makes recommendations for German and European peace and security policy.

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BICC would like to welcome several new arrivals. On 3 February **Susanne Zacharias** succeeded Heike Webb as Assistant to the Director. Susanne has a diploma from the FH Koeln (Cologne Polytechnic) as a translator for English and Spanish. Before joining the BICC team, Susanne worked at the German-American Academic Council Foundation (GAAC) and the Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) Germany. **Tobias Pietz** joined BICC on 10 February. At the moment he is enrolled in the new post-graduate Masters programme in peace and security studies at the IFSH in Hamburg. Within the framework of that programme, and supported by a scholarship from the German Peace Research Foundation, Tobias will be carrying out research for his thesis on the demobilization activities of external organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

A new Ford fellow, **Edward O. Mogire**, joined BICC on 3 March for seven months to compile research on refugees and small arms. Originally from Kenya, Edward has just completed his PhD in peace studies at the University of Bradford. **Marc von Boemcken** who started working at BICC as a junior researcher on 1 April will be involved in a project on the improvement of the effectiveness of arms embargoes. Marc has a Masters degree in political science and international relations from the University of Lancaster.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish our new members of staff the very best for their time at BICC .

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