

Implications of the UN-Iraqi understanding

By Dr. Kenneth Stein

If the diplomatic resolution of the Iraqi-US standoff holds, what are some implications?

First, Saddam Hussein remains in power and with at least the strength he possessed before this standoff. His neighbors are still potential targets for his territorial appetite; neighboring countries remain worried about his intentions. Saddam Hussein's political culture remains unchanged. While there is no guarantee that the use of force would have altered Iraq's course of rule, there is also no guarantee that Saddam will not repeat his cheat again.

Second, despite an unwillingness to allow their territory to be used to support military strikes against Iraq, Arab Gulf states will continue to rely on Washington. American forces will remain in the Gulf to support these regimes and to enforce compliance to the diplomatic outcome of the UN-brokered agreement.

Third, there remains no Arab umpire or Arab mechanism to punish local violators of international law. The Arab solution in the 1990-91 Gulf crisis was to use force against Saddam's invasion of Kuwait; the Arab solution in 1998 was not to use force to coerce Saddam into allowing UNSCOM inspectors to find and destroy his weapons of mass destruction. In both cases, the use of American led force or the threat of using force played a role in the outcome. Arab leaders and organizations still need to find a way for dealing with regional renegades and law-breakers.

Fourth, whether Saddam is in power or not, geography and geology still make Iraq and the Persian Gulf region one of the most coveted economic zones in the world. The world must be prepared for another act, chapter, installment, or book about stability and rule at the northern end of the Persian Gulf. The region contains 65 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and accounts for close to 30 percent of world production.

Until there is a viable alternative to oil as a source of energy, knowing Middle Eastern politics remains important for your economic health.

Fifth, sanctions do work, but slowly and only partially. However, Saddam Hussein focused international attention on the equity of the sanctions regime; in allowing inspectors into his previously restricted sites he did win the ability to have more Iraqi oil sold for the food and medicine needed by his people. Saddam can translate more food and medicines into relief for his people. It remains to be seen whether that makes him more or less secure or liked with his people.

Sixth, this crisis allowed the attention to shift temporarily to the Gulf; now there will be a lingering revival of domestic issues. Palestinian-Israeli negotiations will return to the spotlight; the White House's tribulations will again fill the prurient void; an array of economic and political problems in the Arab world remain daunting; the contentious secular-religious divide in Israel fills the air; and though at different intervals on the ideological spectrum, Turks, Iranians, and Moslem Arab states are defining what modifications might be made in the role that Islamic values play in day-to-day affairs.

Seventh, the Arab world was almost unanimous in its opposition to the use of American force against Iraq. With a single voice, it proclaimed that the US does not pressure Israel in a manner similar to the way Iraq was threatened with force. During this conflict's evolution, the Arab world asked why there is a double-standard: why is Iraq sanctioned, restricted, and threatened while Israel is allowed to do with relative impunity what she wishes with the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan, and by remaining in southern Lebanon? A consensus second question posed by the Arab media asked why Israel was able to

maintain a nuclear threat capability, but an Arab country like Iraq must be naked of all weapons of mass destruction. One can expect Arab leaders to continue to ask these questions and not obtain the satisfactory responses they seek.

Eighth, in the post-cold war international environment a prerequisite for American involvement in a regional conflict was the identification and participation of regional partners if military action were needed to solve a problem. However, this time the absence of regional partners did not preclude planning and dispatch of American forces. Was this an aberration or change in America's post-cold war operational formula?

Ninth, there are rifts in the Security Council about how to handle Saddam Hussein. China, France, and Russia refused to endorse the use of force. One can expect that these countries will translate their opposition to the US position into commercial sweetheart trade deals. The Iraqi leadership will not forget who lined up with and against them in this confrontation. The 1991 diplomatic coalition against Iraq has frayed.

Tenth, the Clinton administration via the Iraqi crisis was able to educate the American people and the international community on the disastrous consequences of biological and chemical weapons proliferation and their possible use. If and how the administration or Congress or other countries take up this issue and do something about it remains to be seen.

Finally, the prestige of the UN and the United Nations Secretary General was enhanced. Quiet persuasion does work in the post-cold war period. It certainly helps and may be necessary to have a stick in your arsenal.

Dr. Kenneth W. Stein is a professor of Middle Eastern History and Political Science at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. ✪

The final purpose of government is not to rule, or bind by fear, not to demand obedience, but on the contrary, to liberate every person from fear so they may live their lives with the highest security . . . The true purpose of government is liberty.

— Baruch Spinoza



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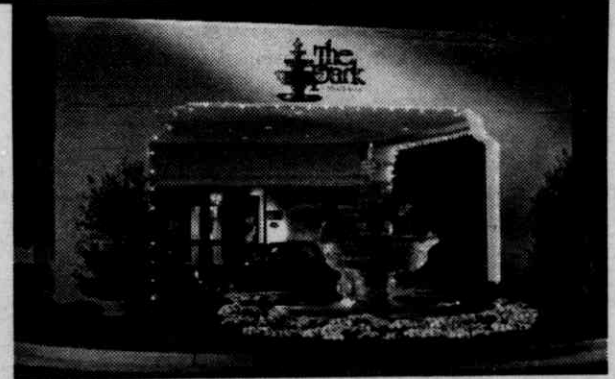


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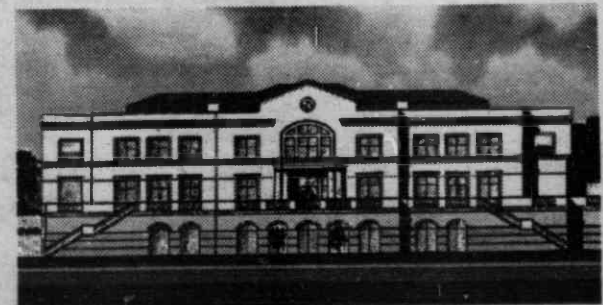
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Learn about the many faces of love — as illustrated in the novels of Nobel Laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer — in a presentation by Jay Jacoby, Professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Jacoby will discuss "Enemies, A Love Story" and "The Slave."

"Enemies" is a post-Holocaust novel in which a traumatized man

(or a womanizer, take your pick) finds himself married to three women at the same time. The setting is in New York City in the late 1940s. This novel was made into a film starring Ron Silver, Anjelica Huston, and Lena Olin.

"The Slave" is set in 17th century Poland, and tells the story of a devout Jew who marries a Gentile peasant (an illegal act, punishable

by death) and then poses as a mute to conceal the fact that she is not Jewish.

Jacoby will discuss the novels on Tuesday, April 7 at 7:00 PM at the Morrison Regional Library, 7015 Morrison Blvd. For more information, contact the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. ✪

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