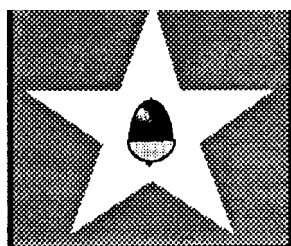


Conflict Studies Research Centre

**Igor Ivanov on Iraq and the
Struggle for a
New World Order**

Dr Mark A Smith

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Key Points of Russian Foreign Policy

- Unlike the Kosovo campaign and 11 September 2001, the Iraq war was not a major turning point in international relations.
- However, further use of force outside UN auspices may break up the anti-terrorist coalition and push other states into unilateral action; maybe into seeking WMD.
- The UN must be reformed, to make it more representative whilst retaining its capacity to act promptly.
- A new, multilateral international system is needed, which
 - closes the gap between 'haves' and 'have-nots' to counter extremism
 - strengthens international law to avoid decisionmaking behind closed doors
 - is democratic, not based solely on economic and military might.

These are the views set out by Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov in the 2003 diplomatic yearbook. They are not new and Russia has no other realistic policy options. Whilst the ideas may gain a following elsewhere, key strategic relationships with both the USA and the EU will continue to be pursued.

Igor Ivanov on Iraq and the Struggle for a New World Order

Dr Mark A Smith

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov published in the 2003 Diplomatic Yearbook of the Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Academy an article entitled "The Iraq crisis and the struggle for a new world system".¹ This article can be taken as a definitive view on the current state of international relations. In Russian foreign policy thinking, there have been two major turning points in international relations since the end of the Soviet Union in 1991.

- The first was in 1999, when NATO states took military action against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in order to resolve the Kosovo crisis without UN Security Council authorisation. In Moscow's view they also failed to consult adequately with the Russian leadership in the run up to using force against Belgrade. This led to a serious downturn in Russo-Western (particularly Russo-US) relations, which only began to improve after Vladimir Putin became president in 2000.
- The second was in September 2001 and the start of the war on terrorism - WOT. The first fruit of the WOT was the use of military force to overthrow the Taleban regime in Afghanistan in October 2001. The US led this operation, which was authorised by the UN Security Council. Russia did not take part in military operations, but supported the operation, giving intelligence assistance to the USA, and military and other assistance to the anti-Taleban Northern Alliance. The WOT has become an important feature of Russo-Western security cooperation.

The Russian leadership does not regard the US-UK attack on Iraq in 2003 as a major turning point, although it does regard this event as a significant setback in the attempt to develop a post-Cold War international system.

Ivanov argues that the cooperation in building an anti-terrorist coalition after September 2001 had provided an opportunity to build a new international system.

¹ This article appears on the Russian Foreign Ministry website http://www.in.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf.

Moreover, a definite hope appeared through cooperation in the fight against terrorism to form a long-term strategy for countering other global challenges and threats as well.

But this opportunity was not taken:

The chance that then appeared, however, was not used in full measure as a consequence of the development of the Iraq crisis. The decision by the US administration to shift the emphasis from implementing the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Iraq to the preparations for overthrowing the regime of Saddam Hussein - whether the US had wanted it or not - had thrown the unity of the global antiterrorist coalition into jeopardy, because it meant an actual review of the fundamental principles on which it had been created.

He criticises the USA and the UK for moving from a policy which aimed at forcing Iraq to comply with UN Security Council resolutions on disarmament to a policy of regime change, which aimed to start a process of democratic change throughout the Islamic world. He argues that these motives would not have received the approval of the UN Security Council, and that no legal grounds existed for the use of force against Iraq, which posed no threat to the security of the USA or any other nation.

Although Russia opposed the war in Iraq, she accepts that coalition forces cannot be immediately withdrawn from Iraq, or the US provisional authority there disbanded, as there are no Iraqi state structures to replace them. Moscow therefore advocates that the UN Security Council should “clearly define the tasks of the international force and the specific time frame for its stationing in Iraq”.

Ivanov concludes that the Iraq conflict makes clear the need to build a new international system. The protracted period of transition in international relations (ie the post-Cold War period) must be replaced by “building a model of world order which would provide conditions for the sustained development of all the states and regions in a global and increasingly interdependent world in the 21st century”. He argues that “there is a need for the formation of a system of international relations which would make it possible not only to meet the existing challenges effectively, but also to prevent the appearance of new ones”.

He does not outline in detail how he envisages a future system, but does lay down some general principles, including the somewhat anodyne statement that a new world order should “provide conditions in which each state would perform the appropriate obligations to the world community, and the latter, in its turn, would protect the lawful interests of each of its members”.

He expresses concern over the use of force in the international arena, noting the increased tendency to use force unilaterally, without operating under the authority of the UN and the existing international legal framework. He

warns that such action may push other states into seeking WMD. He does, however, accept that some states may have security concerns that push them towards unilateral solutions. He argues that the international community must be able to demonstrate that such concerns can be met by collective action. By unilateralism, Ivanov has particularly in mind the USA.

He calls for a reform of the UN.

The UN must continually adapt itself to the new world realities. At issue, in particular, is the development of effective mechanisms for crisis prevention, the improvement of peacekeeping, assistance to the processes of multilateral disarmament and the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the combating of international terrorism and crime, the intensification of the measures for the eradication of poverty and the protection of the environment, and so on.

He says that the UN Security Council must become more representative but retain its capacity to act quickly and promptly. Presumably he has in mind increasing the number of permanent members of the UN Security Council. As permanent members have the right of veto, it may well be that its capacity to act quickly could be undermined rather than retained. This could increase the tendency of some states to act unilaterally if they felt that their national interests were at stake.

Alongside these proposals, he makes general statements about the need for:

- economic justice, in order to prevent a wide split between the “haves” and “have nots,” which could otherwise engender extremism;
- the strengthening of international law to avoid settlements of conflict behind closed doors;
- a democratic international system, which avoids an oligarchic model which determines the rights and responsibilities of states toward each other and toward the world community as a whole solely according to their financial-economic and military strength.

He argues that a democratic international system is best ensured by broad multilateral cooperation between states, which takes into account the interests of all. He suggests that “multilateralism is a reflection of the real diversity and interdependence of the contemporary world; that is, what in current political parlance is customary to call multipolarity”.

He is at pains to point out that the Russian concept of multipolarity has nothing to do with the old fashioned balance of power politics of the late 19th and early 20th century international relations. He argues that the USA’s inability to win the peace in Iraq demonstrates the need for multilateral cooperation, and that states must develop common values if they are to cooperate effectively. He subtly rebukes the USA, warning that:

However, for this to become a reality, all the states, regardless of their political, military and economic strength, must become aware that the realization of their individual interests in the final analysis is impossible without the implementation of the collective interests of the international community.

In his article, Ivanov is repeating what has been a standard Russian line for much of the Yel'tsin and Putin periods (particularly the latter). Multilateralism, multipolarity and avoidance of unilateralism, and emphasis on the United Nations as playing the leading role in legitimising and organising multilateral cooperation have become a leitmotif of contemporary Russian foreign policy. Russian weakness gives her few other realistic options. Russia faces the challenge of combining this approach with the desire to main a close and special relationship with the USA (Ivanov says that Russo-US partnership "has a separate importance as a key factor of security and strategic stability in the world"), which has become less persuaded of the benefits of a UN led multilateralism, and rejects the concept of multipolarity. Russia will continue to pursue these two objectives for the foreseeable future, seeing closer cooperation with the EU (particularly France and Germany) as one of the key means of enhancing multipolarity.

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