

UN Security Council rubberstamps Washington's continuing subjugation of Iraq

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The unanimous vote in the UN Security Council on Tuesday to back the US- and British-sponsored resolution on Iraq has once again demonstrated the body to be nothing more than a sordid clearing house for imperialist interests. For all the fine words about establishing a democratic and independent Iraq, France, Germany, Russia and China have all given their imprimatur to the continued neo-colonial occupation of the country in the face of a continuing and growing popular uprising.

After haggling over the meaning of “full sovereignty” and various minor amendments to the resolution, all 15 countries voted to endorse the biggest lie of all—that the gang of US stooges installed last week as the new interim government represents the will of the Iraqi people. The vast majority of the population has had no say whatsoever in the choice of the regime or the terms under which US officials, backed by 160,000 US-led troops, will continue to dominate every aspect of Iraqi life.

All of the new ministers are supporters of the illegal US invasion of Iraq and they have been carefully vetted by Washington. Most of them are members of parties and organisations that have been on the US payroll for years. Some were even set up with Washington's assistance. The prime minister designate Ayad Allawi has worked with MI6, then the CIA, since the 1970s and declared on Wednesday that he was not ashamed of being “in touch” with at least 15 intelligence services.

The objections raised by France and Germany on the role of the US military simply underscored the fact that Washington remains in charge. The Bush administration rejected attempts to give the interim government a veto over US military operations, accepting instead a series of meaningless amendments enshrining a “full partnership” between the US and Iraqi military. But US forces will retain full powers to roam throughout the country at will, searching homes and detaining prisoners.

While the resolution now provides for a review of the

US military presence in Iraq after a year and permits the Iraqi government to ask for US troops to leave, any decision to revoke the UN mandate can only be made in the Security Council where both Washington and London hold veto rights. Well aware that he and his fellow ministers are completely dependent on the US military for their own survival, Allawi wrote to the UN declaring that he wanted US troops to stay. Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari told the UN Security Council that he was completely satisfied with the arrangements and chided France, Germany and Russia for being “more Iraqi than the Iraqis”.

The continued presence in Iraq of a huge US-led military force makes a mockery of claims that free, democratic elections will take place at the beginning of next year. The majority of Iraqis are hostile to the US occupation, which has brought arbitrary detention, torture and death along with massive unemployment and the destruction of any remaining infrastructure and services. Well aware of the widespread opposition to the US, Washington has handed to the UN the job of staging a poll early next year to provide a democratic gloss to its continuing neo-colonial occupation.

The real centre of political power in Iraq will be the US embassy, the largest in the world, with close to 4,000 staff. This will be headed by the current US ambassador to the UN, John Negroponte, a rightwing political thug with a long record of dirty work in Central America, who will take over after the interim Iraqi government is formally handed “sovereignty” on June 30.

In his job as de facto colonial administrator, Negroponte will rely on the bureaucratic apparatus established by a small army of US advisers over the last 12 months and supervised by a series of US-appointed monitoring bodies. Overall government finances, including all oil revenues, will continue to be vetted by a committee including US, World Bank and IMF representatives. The

interim government will have to honour all contracts signed by the US-led occupation authority.

Just over a year ago, France and Germany declared the impending US-led invasion of Iraq to be unjustified and even illegal. Two months later, the two European powers caved in completely to US pressure and lined up with the rest of the UN Security Council to give the stamp of approval to the military occupation of Iraq. Now both countries, along with Russia and China, have rubberstamped the US puppet regime in Baghdad and continued effective US control of the country.

Russian President Vladimir Putin declared his full support for the resolution, stating: “Without any exaggeration, I would state that it is a major step forward.” While not as effusive as Putin, the other European powers followed suit. Germany’s UN ambassador, Gunter Pleuger, welcomed the “flexible and constructive approach” shown by Britain and the US. Just prior to the vote, French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier declared it would help “in a constructive way find a positive exit to this tragedy”.

The hypocrisy of the European powers is underscored by the fact that all of the justifications offered by Washington for the invasion have been exposed as lies and fabrications. No weapons of mass destruction have been found or any link demonstrated between the Hussein regime and Al Qaeda. US claims to be bringing democracy to Iraq have been thoroughly discredited by revelations of systematic US torture of Iraqi detainees at the Abu Ghraib prison.

The objections of France and Germany to the US invasion never stemmed from any concern for the Iraqi people. Both countries backed the first Gulf War and the regime of UN sanctions throughout the 1990s that resulted in an estimated death toll of half a million Iraqis. In the lead-up to the attack on Iraq, the two powers, along with the rest of the UN Security Council, supported UN resolution 1441, which imposed a highly intrusive weapons inspection program and set the course for war.

The concern in Paris and Berlin was that Washington’s bid to subjugate Iraq and seize control of its huge oil reserves cut directly across European interests throughout the region. In the wake of the invasion, both nations have backed away from an open confrontation with the US, fearing the inevitable economic and political consequences. As the open anti-US insurrection has developed in Iraq, all the major powers have drawn closer together out of concern for the political impact on their interests throughout the Middle East.

Nevertheless, none of the underlying issues that provoked the tensions have been resolved. The differences resurfaced at the G-8 summit held in the US this week. Desperately in need of assistance to shore up its occupation, the Bush administration is, under the umbrella of NATO, seeking the dispatch of European troops to Iraq. To date France and Germany have bluntly refused and also indicated their unwillingness to accede to US demands to write off most of Iraq’s huge \$120 billion debt incurred under the Saddam Hussein regime.

As for the remaining members of the UN Security Council, there is no doubt that their votes were obtained through a mixture of backroom bribes and bullying. In a further demonstration of the subservience of the venal Arab bourgeoisie to imperialism, Algeria cast its vote in favour of the continuing US subjugation of Iraq. The country’s UN ambassador Abdallah Baali hailed the decision as a historic moment for the Iraqi people who would now recover their independence, sovereignty and dignity.

Pakistan also voted for the resolution and has indicated that it may contribute troops to a new “brigade-size” military unit in Iraq assigned to protect UN personnel. Washington has been pressuring Islamabad for months to contribute troops. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has previously declined, fearful of the political opposition it will trigger at home. The new UN resolution now provides Pakistan, Bangladesh and others a backdoor means of acceding to US demands, under the cover of assisting the UN.

Taken as a whole, the grubby exercise in the Security Council will only serve to further strip the humanitarian mask off the face of the UN.



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