

# The Iraq War 20 Years Ago - No Shame. No Lessons Learned. No Arrest Order on NATO State Leaders.

## Jan Oberg

TFF's fact-finding missions and scattered memories

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*Writing this, I must admit that my rage and pain build up inside, still twenty years later. Below, see what TFF and I wrote back then and why we were, simply put, making better predictions on a shoestring budget than the US and other NATO decision-makers on multi-billion-dollar budgets.*

Like other wars and interventions, this was no "mistake". It was an unavoidable consequence of Western *MIRE* - Militarism, Imperialism, Racism and Exceptionalism.

The West has learned nothing. Militarism is now its main cohesive force into its manifest destiny: Decline and fall.

President George W. Bush announcing that he has just started the war on Iraq. Listen carefully! All the arguments and aims he presents were either false, mistaken or outright lies. And sanctimonious.

Permit me start out with a quotation from the British *Stop The War Coalition's* newsletter:

"A report [released this week](#) by the Costs of War Project estimates that between 550,000-580,000 people have been killed since March 2003 in Iraq and Syria and "several times as many may have died due to indirect causes such as preventable diseases."

It goes on to say that "more than 7 million people from Iraq and Syria are currently refugees, and nearly 8 million people are internally displaced in the two countries." These

devastating statistics tell us more of what we already know: the Iraq War was an utter disaster, and the perpetrators should be brought to justice.

This coming week marks 20 years since the invasion led by George Bush and Tony Blair.”

You should be aware also that the US is still on the ground (the US Embassy in Baghdad is the largest anywhere in the world) – it has a series of [military bases in Syria and steals its oil on a daily basis](#).

More people died in Iraq because of 13 years of sanctions than because of the military death and destruction.

And [the costs of this war alone](#) have been close to US\$ 2 *trillion*. And here the [estimated costs up to 2050](#).

And – I predict – the Western mainstream media will do very little about these crimes, the mass killing, this utterly failed war – morally, in terms of international law and in terms of winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people.

And they will keep on focusing on the European war in Ukraine and the suffering of those who are white, Christian and victims of Russia’s comparatively small – but yes, inexcusable – war there.

Why? Because it suits NATO, the EU and the declining West in general. And because, by focusing on Ukraine, NATO countries’ war crimes fall into the darkness. Harold Pinter would probably say about it – it didn’t happen; nothing ever happened there.

Is anybody in the political, military and media wars of the West having second thoughts today? Does anybody have the civil moral courage to apologise?

No – those same Military-Industrial-Media-Academic Complex (MIMAC) elites continue to destroy our world, incapable of learning any lessons. And there should be plenty to learn.

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I did fact-finding in Iraq twice, the second time shortly before the US-misled coalition of the willing did its ‘shock and awe.’ My dear colleague, friend and former UN peacekeeper, retired lieutenant colonel [Christian Hårleman](#) – who at the time was also the chairman of the TFF Board – and I did 160 interviews with people at all levels, from the #3 man in the system, *Tariq Aziz*, Baath party member, military, UN staff – over scholars, diplomats, NGO/women’s organisations to the proverbial taxi driver and people in tea houses – in Baghdad, Babylon, Basra and the UN mission at the border with Kuwait. We gave a lecture for high-level militaries and diplomats at the [House of Wisdom, Bayt al-Hikmah](#), also known as the Grand Library of Baghdad.



Although everyone we met felt misunderstood, demonised and tense at the prospect of Bush's and Blair's bombs soon falling, we – Westerners – were treated everywhere with respect and kindness. For instance, a lady in the reception of our hotel had found that both our birthdays were in January, so we found a beautiful bouquet of flowers in our room that day.

In the spring of 2004, I published my book (in Danish) [\*"Predictable Fiasco. The Conflict With Iraq and Denmark As An Occupation Power"\*](#) (Tiderne Skifter, Copenhagen, 296 pages). Being in Baghdad for just 24 hours, any fool – such as I – would predict that the US/West would never win the hearts and minds of the Iraqis. No way!

This is not the place to go through all that again.

At writing this, my rage and pain build up inside still twenty years later.

I wonder where this boy is today. If he is. I took these photos of him in the old town's book bazaar – he would be about 25-16 today. If he is, what is his and his family's life like today? How did this criminal war shape his childhood? What has it done to his well-being – innocent as he was?



And there were these two extraordinarily decent, competent and kind people with whom we spent hours – Saddam’s weapons expert and liaison with the West on the issue of weapons of mass destruction, [Amir al-Saadi](#) and [Aquila al-Hashimi](#) who was shortly after killed – as was the legendary CARE worker, [Margaret Hassan](#), who was abducted and murdered, and whom we also interviewed.





Dr. Aquila Al-Hashimi and Lieutenant-General Amer Al-Saadi - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Baghdad, January 8, 2003

Al-Hashimi (born 1953) was a director of international relations with a degree in law and a PhD in French literature; she was also involved in the Oil for Food program and destined to become Iraq's UN ambassador. She participated in the Iraqi Governing Council established by the U.S. occupation administration. Perhaps because of that, her convey was attacked by gunmen and she died on September 25, 2003.

Amer Al-Saadi (born 1938) had a PhD in physical chemistry from England and, from 1994, served as scientific advisor to Saddam Hussein and, later, as liaison with the UN weapons inspectors and Dr. Hans Blix. He told me what he told everybody - that Iraq did not have any weapons of mass destruction.

He was # 32 on the U.S. most-wanted list and was the first to voluntarily surrender himself to the occupation authority, on April 12. Thereafter he spent almost two years in custody, some of it in solitary confinement, in the prison close to Baghdad Airport and was released by the authorities on January 18, 2005. He later turned up in Qatar.

When he surrendered himself he said: "Time will bear me out. I was telling the truth, never told anything but the truth. There will be no difference after this war." US Secretary of State, Colin Power, said: "Saadi's job is not to co-operate, it is to deceive."

The coalition attack began on March 19, 2003. Because of the war and 13 years of inhuman sanctions about 1 of Iraq's 24 million innocent citizens died. 4 million had to leave their homes and countless people remain handicapped, wounded and traumatized, children in particular. Large parts of Iraq's heritage has been destroyed. The U.S. and allied occupation created the Sunni-Shiite conflict that is raging in Iraq and, through ISIS, in several other countries. The Western politicians responsible for this are all still at large.

I'm deeply grateful that I met Aquila and Amir there and then and got their decent and truthful view on the conflict.

## Diagnosis – Prognosis – Solutions

So much about TFF's *Diagnoses* and *Prognoses*. We did not continue the work in Iraq and have not visited Iraq since 2003.

But we did bring forward a series of peace proposals – Treatment/Solution – *before* the war. It was a 14-point program developed by [Hans von Sponeck](#) – who had resigned from the UN after more than 30 years of service, including as UN Assistant Secretary-General and UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq because, as he said, he would not preside over a genocide on the Iraqi people – and myself.

We sent it to what was considered one of the finest and most trustworthy media in the world, *International Herald Tribune*. That was in December 2002, and it was accepted. Then it was delayed and then rejected. Read it here with an introduction to this bizarre and disgraceful example of the [mainstream media manipulations then – and even worse now](#):

### [A Road to Peace With Iraq – Europe’s Choice.](#)

In summary, the US/NATO/EU world has learned no lessons from Yugoslavia, Kuwait, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. NATO’s provocative expansion over 30 years right up to the border of Russia indicates the same – while not meant as an endorsement of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

They’ve all been examples of the MIRE mentioned above – Militarism + Imperialism + Racism + Exceptionalism.

And the media play the same role now as back then – just more uniform, more ignorant of the basic criteria of quality media work – *knowledge-based, diversity* in perspectives, solid check of *sources, independent investigation*, aiming at *objectivity* to the extent humanly possible, serving *public education* and being *critical of power* as well as revealing its *abuse*.

In the field of global affairs, this type of journalism is no longer to be found in the Western mainstream, influential media – something I have dealt with at length in a 50-year perspective [here](#). These media have, compared with 2003, become even more tightly integrated into the [MIMAC – the Military-Industrial Media Academic Complex](#) – the elites networking in a murky, criminal society far away from democracy with its checks and balances.

“It is enough that a lie is believed for three days – it has then served its purpose.” — *Marie de Medici, 1573-1642, queen consort and queen regent of France*

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