



APTN / Chatham House Middle East Forum debate

## **The links between the War on Terrorism and the War in Iraq**

Wednesday 28 September 2005, 19.00-20.30  
Chatham House, London

**Speakers:** **Professor Paul Wilkinson**, Professor of International Relations and Chairman of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, University of St Andrews

**Professor Bernard Haykel**, Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern Studies, New York University

**Chair:** **Dr Paul Cornish**, Head, International Security Programme, Chatham House

The debate was held on the record.

### **SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **Paul Wilkinson**

Professor Wilkinson began by explaining the origins of the recent Chatham House Briefing Paper, entitled 'Security, Terrorism and the UK', published in July 2005 shortly after the July 7<sup>th</sup> bombings in London. The Briefing Paper was the product of a two year project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council which aimed to assess the preparedness of the UK for future attacks. The project had involved academics from the University of Southampton and the University of St Andrews as well as involving the co-operation of the FCO, the Home Office, the Police and the Emergency Services. The study focused on a consideration of the political context, changes post 9/11, issues of domestic and homeland security, foreign policy and trends in terrorism. The conclusions drawn by the paper have met with considerable support from specialists.

Professor Wilkinson addressed the issue of the hysteria with which the publication of the report was met in the weeks after the July 7<sup>th</sup> bomb attacks on London. He noted that the tabloid response was to try and link the Briefing Paper's analysis of the current situation in Iraq and the war on terrorism with a direct explanation of the bombings. He pointed out the impossibility of such a connection given the timings and reflected on the potential for distortion in media coverage. Professor Wilkinson pointed out that such views were lent credence by the support of high-ranking politicians who based their support upon the assumptions of the tabloid press. Professor Wilkinson said that he was grateful of the opportunity to clarify the situation.

Professor Wilkinson's conclusions were as follows: Al Qaeda was exploiting the situation in Iraq as it exploits the situation in other areas where conflict is affecting Muslims, portraying the situation as an extension of jihad on a global scale. He pointed out that this portrayal is unsurprising: the insurgency in Iraq is seen as championing the rights of Muslims against those launching an imperialistic attack on Muslims. Professor Wilkinson noted that such conclusions were by no means limited to the findings of the ESRC report. He pointed out that these views were shared by the security services who had warned the British government of the likely results of military intervention in Iraq, just as their American counterparts, the CIA and US specialists, had warned the US government. However, the American and British governments decided that the case for removing Saddam Hussein and altering the political landscape of the Middle East was more important than the war against Al-Qaeda.

Professor Wilkinson reminded the audience that Saddam was never in league with Osama Bin Laden. Indeed on the contrary, Osama Bin Laden was known to teach his followers to hate Saddam Hussein on the basis that the Iraqi president was a secular leader who traded arms. Such a leader could have no credibility in the fundamentalist ideologies of the followers of Bin Laden. There is no evidence of Saddam's involvement in the 9/11 attacks despite the best efforts of the Pentagon. Professor Wilkinson expressed surprise at the crude nature of the speculations from the Pentagon which were recycled by the government and eventually appeared in the newspapers. There is no evidence of collusion between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda. Years on from their orchestration of the 9/11 attacks, Al-Qaeda remains a major threat although fundamentally changed in nature. Although it has become a looser network, Al Qaeda is still capable of inspiring followers as the London bombings demonstrate.

Professor Wilkinson reminded the audience that the removal of Saddam Hussein from power and the pursuit of the war on terrorism remain quite separate issues. Professor Wilkinson reflected that the war in Iraq represents a diversion of effort from the main business of dismantling Al-Qaeda. In his opinion, the invasion of Iraq represents a strategic disaster and is counterproductive to efforts in this direction. According to Professor Wilkinson, the invasion represents a gift in terms of propaganda for Al-Qaeda, acting both as a recruiting sergeant and as a fundraiser in the Gulf and providing a host of targets, military and otherwise. The invasion has exposed an area of instability with porous borders which remain outside the effective control of the authorities. Al-Qaeda are able to take advantage of the situation, using their influence to pump out propaganda to the wider Muslim diaspora, influencing potential recruits with footage of the conflict. Professor Wilkinson suggested that the audience might refer to Peter Taylor's three part documentary 'The New Al-Qaeda' (screened on BBC 2) for a range of rich illustrative material used by Al-Qaeda to boost their recruitment.

Professor Wilkinson asked the audience to refer back to the summer of 2003: the continued coalition presence in Iraq was actually rendering the struggle against Al-Qaeda more difficult and making military and security support in Afghanistan scarce. Afghan President Hamid Karzai had pledged his support for the war on terrorism, but his regime was dangerously exposed and still in need of considerable economic aid after years of civil war in order to ensure its stability and longevity. Professor Wilkinson suggested that one of the tragedies of the coalition invasion of Iraq is that available international aid is now being divided between Iraq and Afghanistan at a time when Afghanistan is desperately in need of continued assistance.

Professor Wilkinson went on to detail a number of grounds for objecting to the invasion of Iraq. One such argument stems from considerations of International Law: many are convinced that the war in Iraq is illegal because of the lack of a UN mandate prior to the coalition invasion. Another argument might be posed on strategic grounds: strategists have pointed to the invasion's disruption of the balance of power that was born of dual containment. Previously, it is argued, the uneasy balance of Iraq and Iran maintained the balance of power. Now this balance has been undermined, resulting in civil war in Iraq and a harder-line Iranian government. Now the supporters and sponsors of the Shi'a government represent a dangerous element in the politics of the region.

Professor Wilkinson suggested that there are many other grounds for objecting to the invasion but stated that the specific interest of the paper was the relationship between the war on Iraq and terrorism: the dangers of riding pillion to a powerful superpower in foreign policy terms. However, the report did not seek to undermine the UK's alliance with the United States. During the Cold War, NATO was of vital importance and there is still much common ground between the United States and the United Kingdom. However Professor Wilkinson suggested that the UK must be more concerned to establish its autonomy in policy terms. He suggested that a good ally should be able to say 'We've thought about it and we don't think it's a good idea'. Professor Wilkinson gave the example of Harold Wilson's government refusing to enter the war in Vietnam, deciding that it was much wiser for Britain to hold back.

Professor Wilkinson stated that the Briefing Paper (and the book to be published by Routledge in 2006) did not seek to excuse terrorism nor does it advocate appeasement. He suggested that such inaccurate assessments had arisen on account of media hysteria and advised a close reading of the report. Professor Wilkinson reiterated that the sole intention of the report's authors had been to draw conclusions that might assist in the protection of the population of the UK and of other countries from terrorism. Indeed he pointed out that the material was not read closely enough and an interim report had been published in February. The report concluded that riding pillion is a high risk and dangerous strategy that does not allow freedom of manoeuvre to steer a policy compatible with national interests. Instead the report counsels that the UK should maintain freedom of movement and that such a position is an achievable objective for the UK. Furthermore, as part of the European Union, the UK ought to take note of the views of the EU, particularly given that the two leading powers in the EU were opposed to military action in Iraq.

### **Bernard Haykel**

Professor Haykel commenced by expressing regret that there would not be too much debate since he agreed in many ways with Professor Wilkinson. Dr Haykel began by explaining the nature of his own research. He studies the Salafi or Jihadi movement through the internet, listening to cassettes and by travelling extensively in the Middle East in an effort to absorb the entire propaganda of the movement.

Dr Haykel suggested that it has traditionally been difficult for the Social Sciences to analyse religious movements. The selection and definition of appropriate terminology and the accurate prediction of trends have all proved problematic.

Dr Haykel stated that, in his opinion, there was little 'double-talk' amongst Jihadis but that, for the first time since 9/11, there are serious cleavages within the movement. He suggested that the coalition invasion of Iraq represents a fantastic opportunity for the

Jihadis comparable to that offered by the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Iraq is effectively a quagmire and for the insurgents, the invasion represents an assault upon Muslims by the Western infidels. On this basis, there is no debate in Islamic law. Muslims have the right to defend themselves against invaders. Al-Qaeda has taken this legal tenet at face value and believes that that resistance is an individual's duty.

The conflict represents a godsend for the insurgents. Like the recent hurricanes which have devastated areas of America, the conflict is seen as an act of God and the Jihadis have taken full advantage of the situation. However the US has proved itself to be a very different kind of opponent to the Russians. The insurgents have not been able to kill sufficient numbers of US soldiers because they are largely confined to their bases and emerge only intermittently in heavily armoured convoys. The insurgents have been forced to reconsider their tactics and have turned instead to suicide bombings against the Iraqi Shi'a community who represent a far easier target than the Americans. This is rationalised by Sunni insurgents on the basis that Shi'a Muslims are hereticized as enemies of Sunni Islam.

However this scheme has arguably backfired since images of Muslims dying as a result of attacks by fellow Muslims have been widely circulated in the international press, inspiring feelings of revulsion amongst Muslims worldwide. Indeed very few Muslims share the Salafi feelings of revulsion towards the Shi'a. Dr Haykel mentioned two justifications used by Salafi/Jihadi groups to justify their killing of fellow Muslims, commenting that the religious and legal justifications used by Al-Qaeda are seen by many to be distinctly dubious. Firstly, it is argued that it is permissible to kill Muslims because, during a war, the Prophet instructed his followers to use catapults against an army that was using Muslims as human shields and that this could be compared with the situation in Iraq to justify the killing of Muslims. A second example from the life the Prophet is proposed as further justification - when an army of Muslims was killed, Mohammed comforted his wife by saying that the dead will be sent to heaven. Dr Haykel commented that these arguments have been met with considerable distaste amongst many Muslims who have pointed to the lack of congruence between the analogy and the situation in question - the Americans are not using Muslims as shields in Iraq.

As further evidence of this growing schism, Dr Haykel cited the example of Al-Basira, an influential Jihadi ideologue based in London, who has publicly condemned the London bombings. Similarly, Al-Mukhtisi has proclaimed that killing Shi'a Muslims is not permissible, suicide attacks are only for exceptional circumstances and wrongdoers will not go to heaven.

The seeds of doubt have been sown within the Salafi movement. The insurgents are failing to kill sufficient numbers of US soldiers and the deaths of Shi'a Muslims increasingly makes bad copy, damaging Salafi recruitment efforts and destroying support for the movement in the wider Islamic world. There is pressure amongst the Salafi community to abandon the struggle in Iraq and to turn their attention to the mounting of spectacular attacks in the wider international arena, such as the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>.

A further group, including the Jordanian radical Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, believe that it is necessary to kill Shi'as, Americans and also to mount attacks on strategic, religious and military targets both inside and outside Iraq, such as the recent attack on an American warship in Lebanon.

Dr Haykel stressed the importance for the international community of capitalising on the schism within the Jihadi movement. The ideologues based in London must not be deported to Syria since their return would bring about their deaths and thereby eliminate the incipient schism. This fracture, or chink in the armour of the Jihadis, is very important as it has the potential to sow doubt in the mind of potential recruits. Ominously, the schism conversely reveals an even more radical element which hereticizes the ideologues (e.g. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's rejection of his former mentor) causing more extreme zealots to attack the West.

Al Qaeda is becoming increasingly adept at using images, sound-bites and video-clips in their propaganda campaign and also at drawing upon a rich store of cultural and historical symbolism. Dr Haykel mentioned a Jihadi website called 'The Black Banners' which draws on the symbolism of black banners raised by the revolutionary movement which overthrew the Umayyad Caliphate in the east in 750CE and led to the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad. Iraq is rich with cultural and religious resonance and Jihadis have used the coalition invasion very adeptly. Dr Haykel recounted a story about a Saudi Jihadi who offered himself as a suicide bomber in Iraq but found that there was a three month waiting list and so returned home. This story, although possibly apocryphal, may reflect the feeling on the street in Saudi Arabia. Clearly the recruitment value of the Iraq conflict has been phenomenal, especially among Saudis. A significant proportion of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi's lieutenants are of Saudi origin.

### **Question and Answer Session**

#### **Dr Rosemary Hollis, Director of Research, Chatham House**

Dr Hollis asked whether the speakers would speculate about the impact on the Jihadis (acknowledging that this may not be an appropriate term) and on Al-Qaeda of a rapid withdrawal from Iraq.

**Paul Wilkinson:** Professor Wilkinson reflected that, in his opinion, such a move would be viewed as a success for the Jihadis who would believe that they had forced the West into taking such action. A quick withdrawal would inevitably exacerbate internal conflict giving rise to all-out conflict between the Sunni and the Shi'a groups. After the withdrawal of western troops under such circumstances, Professor Wilkinson warned that Iraq might become a Jihadi base in the heart of the Middle East from which to export violence to the West, much in the manner of Afghanistan, providing areas for weapons development and training grounds. A swift withdrawal would be dangerous for the fragile elected government which requires stability in order to continue with its programme of economic reconstruction. Given his considerable misgivings about the initial invasion, Professor Wilkinson reflected that many might expect him to favour a quick withdrawal from Iraq. However he stated that he now considers the danger and chaos resultant from such a withdrawal to be of such magnitude as to rule out the option of a quick exit.

**Bernard Haykel:** Dr Haykel said that perhaps there would be a debate at this event after all! In his opinion, a swift withdrawal would be very dangerous but he believes that afterwards the Sunnis would 'clean their own house', thereby engaging the Jihadis. The question of civil war is more of a concern than the Jihadis. The presence of Western troops in Iraq is currently aggravating the situation and the cost is likely to be heavier than that incurred by a withdrawal.

**Dr Paul Cornish, Chatham House:** Paul Cornish asked what the consequences of a withdrawal would be for the Kurds. Would they stay in touch with a unitary Iraq but not with one riven by sectarian violence?

**Bernard Haykel:** Dr Haykel responded that it would depend whether they reacted maturely or immaturely. If Iraq remained free and independent, it would discourage Turkish intervention in the north.

**Sir Hooky Walker, Chairman, Royal Society for Asian Affairs:** Hooky Walker praised both the speakers for their excellent contributions and thanked them for starting the lively debate. He pointed out that subjects such as these are often difficult for laymen to follow. He asked for clarification on the distinction between the views of the ideological leaders of Jihadi groups and those volunteering. He also asked Dr Haykel to clarify the motivations of such groups: was there a sense of solidarity with the fighters in Chechnya and was it helpful to categorise terrorists in such a manner?

### **Bernard Haykel**

Dr Haykel replied that the subject material and ideological/theological issues may sound obtuse to westerners but that this is not the case for Muslims. He suggested a comparison with Christian fundamentalists who may be lay people but still doctrinal literalists. Just because the Jihadis in question are foot-soldiers does not preclude them from imbibing theology at a profound level.

### **Paul Wilkinson**

Professor Wilkinson suggested that classification might be based upon a consideration of how they were inducted into the movement and by whom, given that such considerations have a considerable impact upon how recruits subsequently align themselves. He pointed out that such differences are crucial: little research has been done into how different groups relate to the core ideologies and more must be conducted. Professor Wilkinson suggested that research in the fields of social sciences, historical studies and literature would all be valuable in illuminating these issues.

### **Bernard Haykel**

Dr Haykel pointed out the pitfalls of the US tendency to profile Jihadis as nihilists and anarchists and to brand them 'just like the Communists'. He claimed that such attempts to 'indigenize' the Jihadis by presenting in terms comprehensible to the American people was misguided. In his opinion, the Jihadi phenomenon has no parallel in recent history, perhaps nothing since the religious wars of the sixteenth century.

### **Paul Cornish**

Paul Cornish asked whether, to some with a deep faith, suicide bombing could be seen as natural.

### **Bernard Haykel**

Dr Haykel replied that this was not the case. Although Muslims who are religious might understand the arguments employed, 99% would disagree with the extreme views held by Jihadis.

### **Nicholas Wood, Author**

Nicholas Wood asked for a comment on apparent lack of congruence between the statement of the Prime Minister on September 1 2004 that the forces of terrorism were gathering in the crucible of Iraq and his current view that there is no connection between

the invasion and terrorist activities. He also asked whether the speakers thought that Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib had influenced the London bombers, reminding the audience of the detention of British nationals from Leeds in the American camp at Guantanamo Bay.

### **Paul Wilkinson**

Professor Wilkinson responded that the contradictions implied in Mr Blair's comments arose from the inherent illogicality of his position. He concurred that the experiences of Guantanamo prisoners had almost certainly had an effect on those involved in the bombings: the interviews of those released had stoked public feeling against the US and indeed against the UK for not challenging its ally over the abuses. Professor Wilkinson pointed out that Amrit Singh had argued with the authorities extensively on behalf of detainees. He also pointed to the argument of radicals that Britain ought to have done more to express condemnation of the abuses. The Abu Ghraib images had been transmitted globally and despite the relatively small number of soldiers implicated, the vividness and ubiquitous nature of the appalling images had ensured that their repercussions would fuel hatred of the West in the Muslim world.

### **Bernard Haykel**

Dr Haykel related an anecdote of a conversation with a Salafi contact who had said that although most Arabs would concur that Osama Bin Laden does not lie or misrepresent in his political assessments, most Muslims do not approve of Salafi tactics. This is a major problem for the Salafi movement as they need to focus their energies on tapping into a well-spring of injustice. Despite the difficulties faced by the Salafi movement in recruitment, Dr Haykel pointed out that only a few recruits were required to wreak havoc in London.

### **Unidentified Questioner**

The questioner recalled Professor Wilkinson's earlier example of the British policy of non-intervention in Vietnam and the pre World War II policy of appeasement towards Hitler. The questioner stated that her observations were based on discomfort at the current situation and she asked the speakers how they believed the decision to go to war would be seen in 20 years.

### **Paul Wilkinson**

Professor Wilkinson reminded the audience that the decision to go to war was taken outside the framework of international law, without the consent or backing of the UN Security Council and without any evidence of Saddam Hussein embarking on a course of external aggression. The justification for a unilateral invasion was not there and the weapons claim was bogus. Professor Wilkinson stated his opinion that the fact that Hans Blix was not given the chance to complete his mission would be viewed in the future as outrageous arrogance. Could Saddam Hussein really be seen as a threat to mankind with no-fly zones in place, with sanctions in place and with military forces poised in the Gulf area to contain him? Saddam was no threat to the UK or the US. The lack of support for the invasion in the immediate vicinity of the Middle East arguably demonstrates that he posed no threat to his neighbours. Professor Wilkinson reflected that in the future the invasion will be seen as a huge mistake and a strategic blunder. The only positive aspect would be the fall of Saddam's regime which was undoubtedly a particularly brutal one which killed thousands of Iraqi citizens.

Professor Wilkinson pointed out that it was remarkable that 8 million voters turned out for the recent elections and reflected that there were, perhaps, some positive aspects to an

otherwise mistaken policy. However he concluded that the invasion had been a disastrous blunder and that the true legacy of those involved would be the scar in Iraq.

### **Subiya Al-Azawi, Architect**

Mr Al-Azawi mentioned the plight of many of his own relatives in Iraq. He stated that the true motivations for the invasion had not been touched upon and asked the speakers to comment on the claim that the invasion was an effort to secure the eastern flank of Israel since missiles located in Iraq were the only missiles capable of reaching Israel. He also mentioned oil as a motivating factor for the invasion and claimed that President Bush was motivated by a desire to 'finish the job' started by his father. The speaker said that he was not a supporter of the regime: his own family had suffered dreadfully under Saddam Hussein. He claimed that US forces were unlikely to withdraw from their bases in this area because they were keen to maintain control over Iraqi oil. The speaker mentioned that an American friend had told him of the saying, 'Get the Israeli cabinet out of the White House.' He asked whether the Democrats would have invaded in the same manner as the Neo-Cons had? He also commented that, on the basis of the debate so far, the impression had been given that the Shi'a were not Muslims. He pointed out that there are approximately 472 different sects in Islam and that the Shi'a sect is by no means the only one that differs from the Sunni sect in interpretation.

### **Paul Wilkinson**

Professor Wilkinson stated that he shared the questioner's view that there were other factors involved in the decision to invade Iraq, including oil. He pointed out that the ideological factors must not be underestimated, notably the Neo-Con desire to export democracy. He believes that the Americans are fundamentally mistaken in the belief that democracy can be imposed in such a manner. He also pointed out that military weapons have proved attractive toys and noted the Neo-Con new policy of using force as a first, and not a last, resort: now war can be seen as a regular instrument of policy, employed to fix any political situation. Professor Wilkinson warned of the dangers inherent in such an approach and expressed his hope that such a dangerous misconception should be expelled by the tragic loss of so much 'blood and treasure'. Such an approach would be very dangerous if it was attempted elsewhere.

### **Bernard Haykel**

In Dr Haykel's opinion, the Democrats would not have invaded but warned that new doctrines of benign imperialism were winning support in Washington.

### **Nadim Shehadi, Middle East Programme, Chatham House**

Mr Shehadi said that he did not like to see such agreement at a debate! Using the analogy of the exit strategy for Gaza and South Lebanon, he asked who would take the credit for a quick withdrawal? Surely if the Salafis heard that the Americans were to withdraw, they would seize the opportunity to inflame the situation and to take the credit: no-one would wish to be left behind as a collaborator. Mr Shehadi asked what should be done and how long should the Americans stay? Forever?! It was undoubtedly a mistake to go in but was it a mistake not to go in sooner? Sanctions were ineffective and had only strengthened Saddam Hussein as they had strengthened other authoritarian regimes. Indeed they had arguably created the Salafi movement.

### **Bernard Haykel**

The violent fringe group make up only 5-10% of the Salafi movement but if the radicals attempt to take the credit then so be it. Hamas has to provide services in Gaza or lose credibility. Radical Salafis and Jihadis led by foreigners are at the core of the suicide



attacks. These attacks are, for the most part, not carried out by Iraqis. In Dr Haykel's opinion, whether they take credit for the attacks or not, is not such a major problem as Professor Wilkinson seems to suggest.

On the subject of withdrawal, the US army is said to have 12 months left in it before it 'breaks', unless a state of emergency is declared or the draft reintroduced. Both of these steps would be highly controversial. How can the US army stay in the long term? Perhaps this will be a moot point, unless something dramatic occurs in the interim period.

### **Talal Al-Harbi, Journalist**

The conflict is a gift for Al-Qaeda but what about Palestine and Israel? Why are these holy places not used by the Jihadi propagandists?

### **Bernard Haykel**

Dr Haykel said that the Jihadis have tried to intervene in this area but the Palestinians have made it clear that they do not welcome intervention by Al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda uses the situation rhetorically but there are no plans to use it operationally or tactically. Kashmir, Chechnya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine - all these conflicts have proved productive in terms of recruitment to the Jihadi cause. Dr Haykel pointed out the crucial role of the media in the Jihadi recruitment drive. Literate Arabs and those with access to satellite media can now read about issues affecting Muslims across the world, about the Manukau Islands in Indonesia, the issuing of fatwas and so on. Such subjects were little known 5 years previously.

### **Dr Mai Yamani, Middle East Programme, Chatham House**

Dr Yamani asked for clarification of the term Salafi and pointed out that the most important thing surely was the Sunni/Shi'a dynamic. What effects has the war had upon this dynamic and to what extent is the US aware of the repercussions of its intervention in this field? Terrorism has arguably become a Sunni enterprise whereas, in the 1980s, it was predominantly associated with the Shi'a. Ayatollah Sistani has become a voice of reason and moderation in the Shi'a community. How do these developments affect the balance of relations long term? Dr Yamani also asked how tribal loyalties and national identities relate to Al-Qaeda? The Palestinians resent and resist intervention from Al-Qaeda: is this a tribal question? Lastly Dr Yamani asked about the reference to the involvement of Saudi Jihadis in Iraq and asked for clarification of figures and sources of information and whether there was concern that their influence might have repercussions in Saudi Arabia.

### **Bernard Haykel**

Turning first to the question of the definition of Salafi, Dr Haykel explained that the term 'Salafs' refers to venerable/pious ancestors, the first three generations of the descendants of the prophet ending in 850CE (a 240 year span). The followers of the Salafi movement argue that they must emulate the early generations in order to gain salvation. In theological terms, the Salafis are strict constructionalists and literalists opposed to allegorical discussion: e.g. God is anthropomorphized, his hand and throne are not representative but actual.

On the question of the Shi'a/Sunni dynamic and their respective involvement in terrorism, Dr Haykel reminded the audience that the Shi'a originally employed suicide bombing in Lebanon. Most suicide bombings are perpetrated by Sunni Salafists whereas the Shi'a have been notably restrained. In the midst of such political uncertainty, the clergy are the only institution left to offer a sense of cohesion in Shi'a society. Ayatollah Sistani

commands the obedience of the majority of Shi'a society, with the exception of Muqtada Al-Sadr.

Regarding the tribal element, whilst Fallujah was being destroyed, the Saudis spoke as though it was one of their own cities being destroyed. Dr Haykel suggested that this reflects the strength of tribal links which transcend national boundaries.

### **Paul Cornish**

Paul Cornish said that in his opinion the question of the illegality of the Iraq war was not so clear-cut. The motives for intervention in Iraq were complex and by no means all unattractive. He thought that a powerful humanitarian rationale had appealed to Tony Blair but conceded that that this attempt to create and influence politics through military action had been badly handled. However he felt that there would be worse consequences following a withdrawal and thought that perhaps history might be kinder in retrospect in its assessment of the episode.