

Jowell row unresolved Shia and Sunni Muslims scholars condemn sectarian attacks as civil war threatens Iraq

By Jessica Levy

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Tessa Jowell, remains in office despite weeks of accusations about her knowledge of suspect financial dealings on the part of her now estranged husband.

Ms Jowell was cleared of wrongdoing on March 2nd when Cabinet Secretary Sir Gus O'Donnell reported the conclusions of his speedy investigation into the affair in a letter to Theresa May, shadow Leader of the House, who had requested the inquiry.

Sir Gus ruled that the Secretary of State had not broken the ministerial code of conduct by failing to declare the gift of £350,000 that appeared in her husband's Swiss bank account in October 1999. The argument from Ms Jowell, and supported by the government, being that the Secretary of State did not

know the gift existed.

As Ms Jowell returned to work this week to face the House for departmental questions, her husband, international corporate lawyer David Mills, continued to grapple with accusations from Italian magistrates that the £350,000 gift was a bribe he had taken from Italy's Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi. Judges in Milan allege that the sum given to Mr Mills was a reward for testimony that he gave to keep a 'Mr B' out of trouble during corruption trials in 1997 and 1998. Both Mr Mills and Mr Berlusconi deny the charges. With Italian elections in a few weeks predicted to be a close contest for the Prime Minister, Mr Berlusconi argues that the charges are politically motivated.

When the allegations first arose Jowell claimed that the family finances were no business of hers, and that she knew nothing of the controversial sum of money. Up to

this point the situation appeared embarrassing for Ms Jowell, if not a little incredulous that such a large sum of money would have passed her notice, but it did not transpire that the Secretary of State had done anything wrong.

It was evidence obtained by the Sunday Times that Ms Jowell had signed a form authorising a loan of more than £400,000 on the couple's North London home, which has ensnared Tessa Jowell in her husband's web of complicated financial dealings. The loan was swiftly paid off with the money Mr Mills had received as a gift.

Despite repeated calls for a full and comprehensive independent inquiry from a handful of government and opposition MPs, nothing as yet has been forthcoming. This comes as the Committee on Standards in Public Life this week published its annual report, warning that the system for policing the ministerial code is undermining public confidence in politicians and government.

Described as a popular minister, Ms Jowell is praised for her role in helping London secure the Olympic bid for the 2012 games. But it seems hard not to conclude that she has been tainted by this episode. The Prime Minister and other colleagues are rallying around her to send out a signal that she will not resign. Even if blameless, however, the affair may still damage Ms Jowell's ability to do her job.

The Local Government Minister, David Milliband, dismissed as a "grotesque suggestion" claims that she had announced her separation from her husband as part of a spin operation to save her job. While he may be right about the hurtful nature of such comments, the truth is that the distance placed between Ms Jowell and her husband will make her position in government more secure.

Tim Holmes examines the Iraqi insurgency and discovers it is not driven by foreign fighters but by ordinary Iraqis who oppose the occupation



American forces have faced criticism for heavy handed measures and a poor human rights record that have fuelled the Iraqi insurgency

With the bombing of the al-Askari "golden" mosque in Samarra on the 22nd of February, Iraq seemed to have taken a step closer to civil war. Over the following week, according to Baghdad's main morgue, the ensuing sectarian vio-

lence claimed 1,300 lives - making it "the deadliest of the war outside of major U.S. offensives", *The Washington Post* reported, most of the killing coming "at the hands of self-styled executioners".

The aftermath of the bombing also saw significant calls for unity

between Shiite and Sunni leaders - and a good deal of condemnation directed at the occupation. Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr demanded an end to attacks on Sunni mosques, even sending members of his Mehdi army to protect Sunni mosques within 24 hours of the attack.

"We are not enemies but brothers," he said, "And he who assaults sacraments and mosques shall get his just punishment." He also called for a peaceful demonstration in Baghdad, "involving Shiites, Sunnis and others, in which you will demand the withdrawal of the



1,300 bodies have arrived at Baghdad mortuary after recent attacks

Occupying forces". On the 26th of February, Representatives of Al-Sadr later met with members of the influential Association of Muslim Scholars, widely seen as the most significant public voice of the Sunni insurgency. Both groups condemned attacks that might lead to civil war.

The aftermath of the bombing has demonstrated an underlying tension in the nature of Iraq's insurgency between sectarian conflict and popular resistance to foreign occupation.

The occupation of Iraq is opposed by a substantial majority of Iraqis. Last October, for instance, *The Telegraph* reported the results of a secret Ministry of Defence poll of Iraqis, which concluded that 82% of Iraqis were "strongly opposed" to

the presence of coalition troops; indeed 67% felt less secure because of the occupation.

It is not difficult to see why: Human Rights Watch's 2006 report on "the absence of basic precautions by the U.S. military to protect civilians, including at checkpoints". One marine lieutenant, cited in the *Economist*, summed up the characteristic trigger-happy attitude: "If anyone gets too close to us we fucking waste them; it's kind of a shame, because it means we've killed a lot of innocent people." Torture of detainees, HRW report, is also far from unusual, U.S. Military personnel attesting to "routine and severe beatings of detainees".

A more recent poll by the Project on International Policy Attitudes

found similar attitudes among Iraqis: 87% of Iraqis want a timeline for withdrawal of troops. 64% that the number of violent attacks would decrease; 61% that inter-ethnic violence would decrease; 67% that the availability of public services would increase.

There can also be little doubt that the occupation is the root of the Iraqi insurgency. According to a recent report, U.S. intelligence agencies informed the U.S. Government as early as October 2003 that "the insurgency was fuelled by local conditions - not foreign terrorists - and drew strength from deep grievances, including the presence of U.S. troops." The insurgency, they warned, "was likely to worsen and could lead to civil war."

Despite this, the Bush administration has continued to portray the insurgency as constituted by "former supporters of Saddam Hussein, criminals and non-Iraqi terrorists," the report notes, "even as the U.S. intelligence community was warning otherwise." As a study last September by the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies concluded, the US government has been "feeding the myth" that foreign fighters form the backbone of the insurgency: the real percentage of foreign fighters is "well below 10%, and may well be closer to 4% to 6%."

But whether popular discontent does ensure an end to the occupation, or its replacement with UN peacekeeping forces, most Iraqis, it seems, would be glad to see the back of it.

The Campus Soapbox

I'm grateful to Nouse for allowing me some column inches to explain why most lectures and seminars were cancelled last Tuesday and why as part of action short of a strike many lecturers will not be marking assessments or exams until further notice.

We in the Association of University Teachers (AUT) believe the current action could have been avoided if Vice-Chancellors had responded positively to last October's pay claim which asked them to honour their pledge to devote at least a third of new money coming into the sector to staff salaries. Instead of responding with a serious offer, in January we were told that we had to give up our right to take industrial action and that we had to link our pay claim to that of the non-academic unions who still have yet to announce one. This is an

old ruse of the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA)—which has consistently sought to pit union against union, and to drag out negotiations until late into the summer when university budgets have already been set and

'Chief executives have given themselves a 20% pay rise'

when any action is likely to have minimal impact.

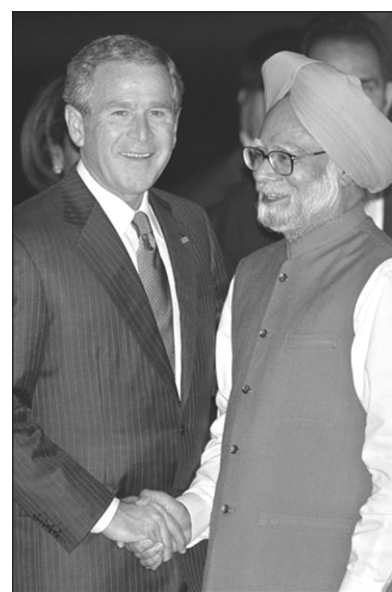
More than £3.4 billion pounds from fees and government grants will flood into universities in the next few years, and a proportion of that money we argue should be used to close the 40% pay gap that has

grown up between university academics and equivalent professionals in the public sector such as senior teachers, civil servants, and doctors. Few people realise that many of the university staff that are paid to train nurses are paid less than the nurses themselves, or that an Economics graduate with a modest degree can expect to start on a City salary paying several thousand pounds more than a new lecturer with a Ph.D. Meanwhile, pay has stagnated over the last thirty years, staff-student ratios have climbed from an average of 1 in 9 to 1 in 23—an increase of 133%. The growing demands of teaching and administration are such that increasingly lecturers are forced to conduct their research outside of working hours. A recent TUC survey calculated that academics work nearly two and half months of overtime 'for free' each year.

Vice-Chancellors do not have to stand on rain soaked picket lines to get the salaries they feel they deserve. They have specially appointed remuneration committees which put together attractive packages to recruit and retain 'chief executives of complex, multi-million pound organisations'. The Times Higher Education Supplement revealed this week that these 'chief executives' increased their salary by an average of 25% in the past three years, taking some above the £200,000 mark and many above the pay of the Prime Minister. AUT's claim (which the University of York describes as 'substantial') is for just over 20% spread over three years. As the THES writes: 'Until the leaders of higher education show the same restraint they are demanding from the unions, disputes like the current one are bound to be well supported.'

Dr Simon Parker
Vice-President, York AUT

US nuclear deal with India angers Iran



Bush meets Indian President

By Philip Parnamets

As negotiations continue over Iran's nuclear programme with threats and pleas being swapped in a global relay race, President George W. Bush travelled to India with a completely different geopolitical message. Prima facie it might seem to the casual observer that the world suddenly leapt another mile down the path of inconsistency. At the centre of the argument lies the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970.

Most countries of the world are party to the treaty (187 out of 192) and the most notable absentees are Israel, Pakistan and India, of which the latter two are confirmed nuclear powers and the first is widely believed to be. Non-proliferation and disarmament are two of the pillars of the NPT; the third is the safe-

guarded use of nuclear technology for peaceful energy means. The wording of this third pillar in two articles gives rise to varying interpretations. It guarantees the "inalienable right" of states to use and develop nuclear technology for peaceful energy means, as long as it doesn't involve the manufacture of nuclear weapons. It also requires non-nuclear weapon states to accept safeguards under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) "with a view to preventing diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons." These safeguards usually take the form of regular inspections of nuclear-related sites.

This is the heart of the issue between Iran and the IAEA, with Iran claiming it has the right to develop a nuclear programme as long as it is peaceful. The IAEA has

never declared Iran to be in violation of the NPT, but matters were complicated in 2002 with the discovery of several clandestine nuclear facilities. This is what gives rise to suspicions that Iran is intending to develop nuclear weapons. However, countries like Israel have committed themselves to take unilateral action to prevent any form of potential for nuclear weapons arising. This in turn gives a rationale for keeping nuclear programmes secret, as Iran realises countries like the USA or Israel are disposed to suspect it.

The issues surrounding Iran's nuclear ambitions are not confined to worries concerning the NPT. This is illustrated by the deal reached in early March 2006 between India and the USA regarding nuclear cooperation. It entails India splitting its nuclear programme into a civilian and a military component and

allowing the IAEA to inspect its civilian facilities. In return, the USA will provide civilian technology to India, in effect signalling a definitive end to its isolation in the nuclear scene. However, it is feared that this means a tacit acknowledgement of India as the world's sixth nuclear power, something that could plausibly strengthen the Indian bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, and that this deal will hollow out the NPT.

The world thus risks a further erosion of international relations. Labelled a 'crisis' in Iran and a 'landmark achievement' in India, how the situation develops will depend largely on the actions of China. Traditionally, China has been opposed to Security Council action against Iran, and the energy hungry nation buys a lot of gas and oil from Iran. This opposition may fuel the

efforts of diplomatic solutions, but it may also provoke military actions from a frustrated Israel fearing its very existence. China also insists that any Indian nuclear activities be brought within the auspices of the NPT, which would of course mean total unilateral disarmament for India. If Beijing decides to interpret India as an emerging rival this might lead to geopolitical alliances destabilising the already fragile region marred by tensions in Kashmir and civil war in Nepal.

What is clear is that whatever solutions are reached, these will largely be geopolitically determined, with trade and energy policies being key determinants unfortunately, as these are unlikely to be conducive to strengthening the authority of the NPT and this treaty is still the best protection against global nuclear armament.