

Will There Be an Iraq?

by Hussein Askary

A closer look at the situation in Iraq during a recent visit to the region filled me with the fear and anxiety that the Iraq that I once knew, from my childhood to adult years, is no longer the same, and could become something else other than an Iraq. Iraq today is a divided nation physically and mentally. Civil wars, not only one civil war, are now an immediate and live threat. Iraq's different provinces are not run by "the government," but by different sectarian and ethnic militias that are fighting for dominance against both organized crime gangs and militant groups—whether part of the "Sunni" insurgency or newly created terrorist groups—and against the U.S. and British troops.

To save Iraq, as a united nation and source of culture and ideas with its deep and ancient grounding in history, an immediate, concerted effort is required by a new and prudent leadership in the United States, in collaboration with the nations of the region without discrimination. A clear exit strategy for the U.S.-British Coalition forces from Iraq has to be drawn up. In this context, a national reconciliation conference and campaign has to be launched to heal the wounds of what is threatening to become the bloodiest civil war in the country's history. This should be done with the sponsorship and cooperation of the neighboring nations, especially Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and Syria. The exit strategy itself has to be coordinated and guaranteed through a security agreement with Iraq's neighbors. A withdrawal under fire by the U.S. troops will only turn Iraq into a situation worse than Somalia in the early 1990s.

In the meantime, all discussion of the drafting and ratifying of a new Iraqi constitution has to be postponed, until the security and economic situation is stabilized and new, legitimate elections are held. This situation is not only a threat to Iraq itself, but also to all its neighbors, who will face similar sectarian and ethnic struggles if Iraq is divided. Saudi Arabia, in the first place, and other Gulf states as well, are deeply concerned that the sectarian struggle in Iraq would spill into their oil-rich eastern region where there is a majority of Shi'a Muslims living in the Sunni-dominated country. This has prompted Saudi Arabia and other Arab states to finally make certain political moves to intervene in the Iraqi situation, as reported below.

Blind Terror

Iraq's leadership and political elite today resemble a ship of fools. The population is held hostage between blind terror that strikes anytime, anywhere, and U.S.-British military at-

tacks and "dirty war" tactics. The population, both Shi'a and Sunni, are being pushed to the edge of madness, through terror, assassinations, massive military attacks, lack of water and electricity and basic services, and massive brainwashing propaganda through dozens of private satellite TV channels pushing sectarianism and desire for revenge against fellow Iraqis. All that, while the real cause of the disaster in Iraq—i.e., the Bush-Cheney-Blair neo-con war strategy—is being obscured and covered up.

The lines between disgusting terrorist acts against innocent civilians, mainly Shi'a, and legitimate resistance against the occupation are being erased. Any intelligence service can open shop in the country and hire car bombers or suicide bombers, and order assassinations and kidnappings. In late September, British special operations soldiers were arrested in broad daylight in Basra, disguised as Arab terrorists, carrying explosives, detonators, guns, and sophisticated communication devices, driving a civilian car. What were they up to? Nonetheless, they were freed by British tanks that smashed the Iraqi prison where they were held for interrogation, and their traces were covered up and removed.

One of the most dangerous developments in the country has been the use of ethnic militia in U.S. military operations against the "Sunni" insurgents. Following the dismantling of the Iraqi army and security forces by U.S. Administrator of Iraq Paul Bremer in 2003, the only organized militant forces left there were the Kurdish militias and the Shi'a Badr Brigade, which belongs to the now governing Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The newly created al-Mahdi Army of Shi'a cleric Muqtada Assadr, has remained against the sectarian division and focussed its attacks on U.S. and British troops. The recent military actions in Western Iraq have been carried out by the U.S. forces with the support of the Kurdish and Shi'a militias that form the bulk of the new "Iraqi Army."

This has led to the deepening of the hostilities between the different sects. Extremists of both sides have called for revenge, and terrorist groups, such as the al-Qaeda of Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi, whom many Iraqis actually suspect to be the creation of U.S., British, or Israeli intelligence, have been carrying out blind terrorist acts against Shi'a civilians in marketplaces and mosques. In the meantime, death squads, dressed as Iraqi army troops and police, have been kidnapping and killing Sunni young men and religious leaders, in addition to prominent figures in the former regime of Saddam Hussein.

In certain periods, waves of assassinations against specific groups of Iraqis are organized by mysterious forces. For example, early in September, a wave of assassinations targeted school teachers and then university professors. Before that, engineers were hit. The simple explanation provided by the official media is that these are groups of former Ba'athists and Sunni insurgents, who are accusing anyone going to his job of being a collaborator with the U.S.-British occupation.



Lyndon LaRouche is being interviewed by EIR correspondent Hussein Askary, on April 24, 2004.

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Economic Conditions

In discussions with Iraqis, one can see the horror engulfing the population as a result of this security situation. The population is kept in a permanent state of anticipation of death at any moment. Most people are psychologically and practically crippled, because they can't move around in the towns, especially in Baghdad. Added to this hell, are the economic conditions. Clean water and electricity have become luxuries. Following the invasion in April 2003, electricity started to disappear for three hours and come back for three hours to Iraqi households. In 2004, this became what the Iraqis call 3 to 1. That is, three hours blackout and one hour of supply. This year, especially in the Summer, this became 6:1. As for the unemployment, it is still as high as 60-70%. National production is almost non-existent. Iraqis, who are living in a permanent semi-social-welfare state, buy everything from abroad: food, clothing, household devices, etc. The "free-market" policy introduced with the invasion has turned Iraq into a "flea-market economy." For example, relatives of this author who had been running a textile factory for three decades, had to shut down the factory and start importing Chinese cheap products to sell and make a living from, because the Iraqi market is flooded with such products of all sorts. The few dollars each family gets each month are supposed to keep a "consumer society" at a minimum living standard. But health care, electricity, clean water, and transportation are not things the Iraqi traders can bring from China.

The finances of the state, generated mainly by oil exports,

are being looted and moved outside the country. In early September, the "anti-corruption ministry" announced that \$1 billion had just "disappeared" from the former Defense Ministry of the transitional government of Ayad Allawi, which was functioning under the U.S. occupation. The money was allocated to phony weapons contracts with foreign firms. The same goes for almost all other ministries. So-called reconstruction contracts are offered without bidding to foreign companies such as Halliburton, which in turn hire Iraqi contractors to carry out some of the work, for a fraction of the real value of the contract.

Constitution Fraud

In the past weeks, one of the biggest frauds, called drafting the permanent constitution, was arranged. First of all, the text that has been agreed upon by dominant Kurdish Alliance and Shi'a Coalition is nothing more than the U.S.-imposed Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) of Paul Bremer, with slight changes to satisfy the special interests of some Kurdish and Shi'a political groups, better described as sectarian and ethnic militias. The main aspect of the draft is the division of the country along ethnic and sectarian lines, in a so-called "federation."

The mysterious text of the draft, which is supposed to be voted on by the Iraqi people on Oct. 15, has yet to be printed and delivered to the electorate, as of Oct. 5. But even as it was allegedly being sent for printing and distribution by the UN, the U.S. Ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad, was



USAID/Thomas Hartwell

Iraqi local leaders from Abu Ghrayek. Today the population is being pushed to the brink of madness, by the U.S.-British occupation, the daily threat of death by blind terrorism, and the lack of the basic economic necessities of life. This is driving sectarian divisions that could soon lead to civil war.

running around urging the Kurdish and Shi'a parties to make changes to the "finished" draft, in order to get it accepted by the Sunnis. The Sunnis have rejected the draft, because it threatens to divide the country into small pieces run by sectarian and ethnic warlords, and also deprives the previously privileged Sunnis in the west of the country of important revenues from Iraq's oil.

But rather than taking a stance on the basis of principle, Sunni political leaders are buying into the myth that what is going on in Iraq is an "Iranian conspiracy," and that Iran and the Bush Administration are working together to give Iran control over southern Iraq. The only effect this nonsense has is to mobilize Sunnis and Arab extremists in neighboring countries in support of the ongoing march toward a civil war. This was the same propaganda which was used by Iraq's former dictator Saddam Hussein to fan the flames of war with Iran in 1980-88. The Iraqi Shi'a and Kurds are being urged by their political and religious leaders to vote "yes" for the constitution, no matter what the content is, because it is alleged that this is the only guarantee that Saddam and his Ba'athist henchmen will never return to power. Many Shi'as are skeptical of this scare tactic, but under "group pressure" they might have to get in line. As for the Sunnis, they are being prevented from going to the ballot through a massive military operation, which expands throughout the so-called Sunni triangle in Ramadi, Salhaddin, and Ninevah. These are the three provinces that potentially could vote down the draft of the constitution, if two-thirds of the voters there vote "no." This is according to the established rules under the TAL itself.

Now, certain forces in the Iraqi Parliament tried at the last minute (on Oct. 4-5) to change the rules of the referendum to make it impossible for a "no" vote to be achieved. The change implies that more than two-thirds of the population is required to vote the draft down. However this move was defeated in the parliament.

Arab League Move

As the reality of the incredible quagmire the U.S. and British troops have found themselves in, and the imminent threat of civil war, became obvious, the Arab League, under urging of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, convened a meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Oct. 3 to discuss actions to be taken to avoid a civil war in Iraq. The foreign ministers of the Arab League decided to send Secretary General Amr Mousa to Iraq "immediately," to discuss with all the Iraqi forces the issue of convening a "national reconciliation conference" under the auspices of the Arab League. This conference is planned to be held on Oct. 25.

This is the first time the Arab countries have dared to intervene in Iraq since the U.S.-British invasion in March 2003. Observers in the region

had different interpretations of this move. Some said that it was prompted by the U.S. Administration to put pressure on the Sunnis, to get them to agree to the draft of the constitution. However, another interesting aspect of this is, that this is probably the long-awaited intervention by Iraq's neighbors to save the face of the U.S.-British troops, paving the way for an organized exit strategy. This move could be followed by the re-introduction of the idea of moving Arab armies into Iraq for peacekeeping, instead of the U.S.-British troops. This is the type of action that Lyndon LaRouche called for in his "LaRouche Doctrine for Southwest Asia" (see *Documentation*). Iran and Turkey are not members of the Arab League, but their participation in these efforts would be crucial. The two countries are members of the "Group of 6" including all Iraq's neighbors. In collaboration with prudent forces in Iraq such as Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani; the Association of Muslim Clerics; Sheikh Ahmed al-Kubaisi, the Iraqi "Sunni" religious leader who publicly supported the LaRouche Doctrine; Mohammad Jawad al-Khalisi, leader of the reconciliatory Iraqi Founding Congress; and other patriotic and religious forces, the stabilization of Iraq internally would be possible. However, the initiative should come from the United States, through a shift of the U.S. policy.

Iraq has gone through many disasters in the past, but this one is existential. However, this is not only about Iraq; it is about the future of the whole region and the United States itself. Therefore, many forces have to be involved in stabilizing the country and establishing peace and reconstruction in the whole region.