

Quo Vadis Iraq; Quo Vadis Bush?

by Jürgen Hübschen

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EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

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“God told me to end the tyranny in Iraq, and I did.” With these words, former Palestinian Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath quoted American President George W. Bush, from the Israeli-Palestinian summit in July 2003 in Sharm al-Sheikh. It would be good if the U.S. President were to receive some advice from God on how he might master the situation in Iraq and in his own country. The current problems in the United States and in Mesopotamia are actually two sides of the same coin.

On March 20, 2003 George Bush gave the order for the illegal military operation “Iraqi Freedom.” Today, more than two and a half years later, one can ascertain that this operation has failed and that Iraq is de facto in civil war.

The American troops are fighting a war which they cannot win, and it is becoming increasingly clear, that Iraq will become for the United States what Afghanistan was for the Soviet Union. Even a military superpower cannot win a guerrilla war, especially when it is hated by the population of the occupied country. Out of a proud “coalition of the willing,” in the meantime, an alliance has remained among only U.S., British, and Australian soldiers, who still have battle orders, not yet defined in duration. Many former allies have already left Iraq, while others are preparing to withdraw their troops. Even the Australians and British are giving initial hints that a withdrawal is no longer excluded.

The U.S. troops, in the meantime, have suffered almost 2,000 deaths and 15,000 wounded. The number of traumatized troops is not known, but one can assume that they are

more likely 200,000 than 100,000.

The morale of the fighting troops has been heavily hit, because the reasons for the war were lies, no political concept is visible, and the war aims have not been achieved.

Iraq is today as democratic as in the time of Saddam Hussein. Aside from his overthrow, nothing has gotten any better, but rather worse. The U.S.-backed Iraqi government is more interested in hanging on to its own power and protecting its relatives, than in the construction of a democratic state. The Kurds and Shi’ites meanwhile have come into such conflict, that the Kurdish President, Talabani, recently called for the resignation of the Shi’ite Prime Minister, Jaafari, on the grounds that he had broken coalition promises and wants to control the government. The Sunnis have not been given participation in power, and therefore, there will be no majority for the constitution, in the referendum scheduled for Oct. 15.

The American administration had promised an improvement in the situation, at the time of the transfer of power on June 28, 2004, days after coalition administrator Paul Bremer had fled the country. The administration erred and errs again, in claiming that after the elections on Jan. 30, 2005, everything would be better. And George Bush and his neo-conservatives will find that they were wrong, because the Oct. 15 referendum will fail, or will be manipulated, and after that, the smoldering civil war will break out.

The Iraqi government will not be able to master the situation, because its own security forces are not deployable. This applies equally to the army and the police, even though President Bush, on Oct. 5, 2005, declared repeatedly: “The Iraqis are showing more and more capability of taking the fight to the enemy. As they become more capable, we will be able to bring folks home.”

In this context, one should rather trust the evaluation of the situation given by the commanding general of the U.S. troops in Iraq, George Casey, who said: “Just one of the 120 U.S.-trained army and police battalions is able to operate without U.S. forces.”

Thus, the American troops are almost exclusively relying on themselves in a war against a mostly invisible enemy who is underground, and whose actions are increasingly effective.

The American soldiers are faced with incredible psychological pressure, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, because they do not know where the enemy is, what he looks like, and what he may do next. Professional troops are hardly able to handle such pressure, much less reservists and members of the National Guard, who make up almost 50% of the U.S. troop presence now. In addition, the largely very young soldiers have nothing to hang onto; they have absolutely no overview of what the overall situation looks like, and no one tells them when they may go home. They cannot cope with the fact that they were lied to by their supreme commander; that the reasons why they were sent into war were artificially created, because in Washington there were and are men who wanted

to have this war and who are even now not ready to end it. The testimony of former Secretary of State Colin Powell, who had been Chief of General Staff of the U.S. Armed Forces prior to his political activity, that his appearance at the Security Council on Feb. 5, 2003 was a blemish on his biography, has further strengthened the doubts of soldiers in the meaningfulness of their mission.

In connection with the Vietnam War, the saying went around: "And if they ask you why you died, then say, because your fathers lied." This saying has begun to circulate again in the United States, and since the end of Summer 2005, it can no longer be ignored. And this is a completely new problem for the U.S. government: The Iraq War has come to the U.S.; and the U.S. President and his neo-conservative advisors were not prepared.

Blind 'Patriotism' Works No More

The war will become the dominant political issue, and all the usual diversionary tactics of the administration will end in nothingness. This is essentially due to the fact that the Senate and Congress, on a bipartisan basis, have realized their responsibilities again. No one is letting himself be driven into a corner any more with the argument that he who does not support the President in the war against terrorism, is an asset of the terrorists. No one any longer accepts the idea that one is a patriot only when one supports the policy of the administration and this President.

The most relevant example of this is the 90-9 vote in the Senate, "to prohibit the use of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment against anyone in U.S. government custody, regardless of where they are held." In order to force the government to implement this ban on torture, the Senate conditioned its support for the \$400 billion military budget on this amendment.

An indictment has been handed down against Tom DeLay, leader of the Republican majority in the House of Representatives, for, among other things, abuse of election campaign contributions. I. Lewis Libby, the Chief of Staff and National Security Advisor of Vice President Dick Cheney, from the neo-cons' camp, will have to respond regarding his having "outed" Valerie Plame, the wife of former Ambassador Joe Wilson, the last ambassador to Iraq. And it is still not clear, whether or not Karl Rove, Bush's closest advisor, may be dragged into stormy seas as the "stringpuller in the background." All this will put President Bush in enormous difficulties, and already the polls give him only 35% support for his leadership capability.

The war lies in connection with Iraq were initially forgiven, because after all, a tyrant had been brought down. Hurricane Katrina, however, finally opened the eyes of the average American, who on principle believes in the President, respects him, and essentially trusts and follows uncritically. Now, the errors in Iraq are added to the failures at home, and this could become a deadly mixture for the President. In

addition, there are enormous economic problems; the latest collapse in turnover at Ford and General Motors are the most recent examples of this.

Quo vadis Iraq—*quo vadis* George Bush? To ruin, to chaos, is the answer, unless something happens. And therefore, something must happen, and right away. As the Minority Leader in the Senate, Harry Reid, said, "We will not accept staying the course."

To End Iraq War—Dump Cheney

This change of course in U.S. policy is not only in the interest of people in Iraq and the United States, but also of Europe, and the rest of the free world. This will happen only if Vice President Cheney is forced to give up his office, and the neo-cons are removed from the government apparatus. In this way, perhaps the American President would recover his freedom of maneuver.

In Iraq, unrestricted responsibility must be given over to the UN, and the allied soldiers must be placed under UN command. A UN peacekeeping mission must be established, as the Foreign Policy Commission of the European Parliament months ago demanded. On this basis, European states would also send troops to Iraq, something which they were—for good reason—not formerly ready to do.

The U.S. troops, as well as the British troops, cannot and should not at this point in time, however, withdraw from Iraq, because this would lead to the final disintegration of the country. A plan for the reconstruction of Iraq should be developed with the UN and Iraq, and it should include a concept for the withdrawal of U.S. and other foreign troops. Until the start of the withdrawal, American and other foreign troops, who have become objects of hatred by the Iraqis, due to the torture scandals, their failed policies, and their arrogant and inconsiderate attitude, should be tasked exclusively with securing the borders of Iraq.

The Europeans should support the UN in the administrative and political reorganization of Iraq, as well as by economic reconstruction. In this respect, the Kurds must give up part of their privileges in favor of a balanced federal system, and the Sunnis must be brought into the political process.

A constitution should be voted upon, only when all ethnic and religious groups agree on it. Then, free elections should be held, under the auspices of the UN. The deployment of armed forces and police should be the competence of the UN.

The responsibility for the required policy shift in American policy lies causally in Washington, but convinced Atlanticists should take initiatives themselves, in case the American government refuses to make the necessary changes in direction.

It is not sufficient for Europe to be content with refusing to support current U.S. policy; rather, in accordance with the wishes of those affected, and of the Atlantic partnership, which is equally important for the U.S. and Europe, concrete engagement is required.