

A profile of Iraqi opposition groups

The Iraqi opposition groups today consist of two categories: 1) on-the-ground militant groups in northern Iraq and in Iran, which have potentially large logistical and geographical advantages, and 2) London-based propaganda groups, which could be called “shops,” or members in the “British zoo” of Third World political destabilization operations.

The first group includes the Iraqi Kurdish parties based in the U.S.-British-protected, UN-sustained provinces of Duhok, Erbil, and Sulaimaniya, in northern Iraq. The control of the whole region has been reduced to two major armed political groups, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Kurdistan and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Northern Iraq

The **Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP)**, under the leadership of Masoud Barzani, controls the border area with Turkey in the north, and the cities of Duhok and Erbil. It is tribally based, with a well-organized history in guerrilla warfare dating from the early 1960s when the late Mullah Mustafa Barzani (a Moscow-trained officer) was fighting the Iraqi government to secure autonomy for the Kurdish region of Iraq.

Since 1991, the PDK has established limited but functional administrative organs financed by the income from taxes on petroleum product exports (smuggled to Turkey from Iraq with implicit agreement from the UN). This income (in 1994, some \$70-100 million) is mainly used to recruit and arm jobless Kurdish youth (the economy in the region has collapsed). This income has been the object of a bloody war between the PDK and its rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) since 1994. The PDK can mobilize up to 30-40,000 men, equipped with light weapons and short- and medium-range artillery and missile launchers.

Over the past 40 years, the family of Mustafa Barzani has shifted its loyalty away from the Soviet Union, which armed him. He negotiated with Baghdad in the early 1970s, and gained limited autonomy in 1971. In 1975, during Henry Kissinger's White House reign, Mullah Barzani was double-crossed, with the Algeria Agreement between Iran and Iraq forcing him to abandon Kurdistan. He ended up in Israel, and later the United States, where he died in 1979. His son Masoud was supported by Iran and Syria during the Iran-Iraq War in 1980-88.

The PDK fought against the Iraqi Army after the Kuwait war, and negotiated with Saddam Hussein for a withdrawal of Iraqi Army forces from the northern provinces in 1991-92. Together with the other Kurdish groups, the PDK established a regional government and parliament in 1993, which col-

lapsed in 1994 when fighting broke out with the PUK over oil tax revenues. The PDK then allied with Turkish government forces to eliminate the Turkish Kurdish group, the PKK.

Most significantly, in 1996, the PDK cooperated with the Iraqi Army to retake the city of Erbil from the PUK. This operation helped the Iraqi government bust up a major CIA operation in Erbil, resulting in the arrest and execution of hundreds of the CIA's Iraqi agents; thousands more fled to Guam with the help of the U.S. Air Force. The Iraqis confiscated massive amounts of records, and immediately handed the city over to PDK forces and withdrew from the city—a very strange settlement indeed. The CIA operation was coordinated with British intelligence and the London-based opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress (INC).

The PDK policy is autonomy for Kurdistan within a unified Iraq. It has continued its secret contacts with the Iraqi leadership, and is opposed to adventuristic U.S.-British operations aimed at the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, because it justifiably fears that the Kurds will be the first to be sacrificed in case of failure.

The **Patriotic Union of Kurdistan** is under the leadership of Jalal Talabani, who has been the arch-rival of Masoud Barzani and his father, Mullah Mustafa, since the early 1960s. The PUK controls the province of Sulaimaniya, bordering on Iran. It has no clear strategy, but apparently acts with the sole aim of continuing the destabilization of the region. The PUK, like the PDK, has also exchanged owners since the 1960s. It split from the PDK over opposition to negotiations between Barzani and Baghdad in the late 1960s and in 1970-71.

The PUK maintains a smaller armed force than does the PDK, and one which is less disciplined and less well armed. But it is alleged that the PUK can get weapons from Iran on short notice, to maintain the balance of power in the region against Turkish incursions. The PUK has the support of the European human- and ethnic-rights mafia, especially from Danielle Mitterrand, the widow of the late French President François Mitterrand.

The PDK and PUK, with the help of Washington and London, signed a peace agreement in Washington in September 1998. The agreement includes provisions for cooperation in establishing a regional government and a parliament through elections to be held in June 1999. The agreement also includes plans for unifying the armed forces of the two groups to form a Kurdish army.

Southern Iraq

The **Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)**, under the leadership of Mohammed Baqir Al-Hakim (a scholar in Imamite theology), is the only significant armed opposition group in southern Iraq. It is a Shia-based group with camps in Ahwaz in southwestern Iran. It has an officially estimated armed force of 15-20,000 men, called Badr Force, which was established during the Iraq-Iran War and fought as a division in the Iranian Armed Forces. Iran uses the SCIRI as a counterweight to the Iraq-based Iranian

terrorist group Mujahideeni Khalq, and when Iraqi-Iranian normalization negotiations were advancing during the last two years, there were reports that Al-Hakim might move to Syria or Lebanon. The Iranian government tightly controls SCIRI strategy and financing, and prevented the group from using its heavy weapons and transport facilities during the uprising against Saddam Hussein by Shia Muslims in southern Iraq following the Gulf War in March and April 1991.

Iran has announced that it rejected proposals from the United States and Britain to help overthrow the Iraqi regime during the bombing campaign of December 1998, because it does not trust Anglo-American geostrategic intentions. Therefore, the SCIRI has moved closer to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The Badr Force has reportedly been moved to Kuwait, where it is to participate in possible operations against the southern Iraqi city of Basra. The SCIRI claims that it is opposed to adventurist operations to overthrow Saddam Hussein, but has demanded that the United States and Britain implement a wider plan to isolate and overthrow Saddam by declaring all of southern and western Iraq a disarmed zone, to be "protected" by the UN, as in the Kurdish region.

'British zoo' groups

The other groups, all based in London and tightly controlled by the British Foreign Office and Parliament, i.e., exist only as statistics and propaganda organs, include: The **Iraqi National Congress (INC)**, the **National Accord Group**, **His-Bu Addawa**, and other groups that are mainly formed around personalities from the Iraqi past, such as Saad Salih Jabur, the son of a former minister in pre-1958, British-controlled royalist Iraq. Jabur was a mediator between a group of Iraqi Army officers and the Bush administration in 1992-93, during a military coup attempt that allegedly had help from the U.S. Air Force. The help never arrived, and the 30 officers were all executed.

Al-Sharif Hussein Bin Ali's **Constitutional Royalist** group. Bin Ali, a cousin of murdered King Faisal II, was the sole survivor of the republican revolution in 1958. He was two years old when his family fled, and he has spent all his life in London.

Then there is Mohammed Bahr-el Uloom, a Shia leader descended from a family of theology scholars, who were politically active in the cities of Najf and Karbala.

There is a long list of such personalities who are former members of the ruling Baath Party who fled Saddam Hussein's reign in the late 1960s and 1970s. They have no base of support in Iraq, and are almost unknown to the majority of Iraqis.

The INC is headed by Ahmed Al-Chalabi, who is wanted in Jordan for defrauding Al-Betra Bank in a financial swindle. He is the favorite of the Republicans in the U.S. Congress. Since the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq, the INC has been attempting to bring around it Iraqi dissidents in Europe to form a unified group, but it lacks a policy or strategic direction other than the slogan of overthrowing the Iraqi regime. The

INC has been a provider of intelligence to British and American security agencies, and has run campaigns originating from the British Parliament, such as the campaign to indict Saddam Hussein for crimes against humanity, and to tighten the embargo against Iraq. It has been appealing to the United States and Britain to create a safe haven in southern Iraq, from which it could establish a provisional government as a first step to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

The **Iraqi National Accord**, a favorite of the U.S. State Department, is a relatively new group which includes Iraqi Army, intelligence, and diplomatic defectors. The best known among these is Muwaffaq Assamarai, a former Iraqi Army intelligence chief who defected in 1994. He is a provider of important intelligence and other state secret information, but his political-strategic thinking is nonexistent. Therefore, the group is headed by a group of former Iraqi diplomats and officials who have been educated and fostered in Britain, such as Ayad Allawi, a former Baath Party official and diplomat. Other members of the group have the advantage of knowing the internal mechanism of the Iraqi establishment, and have contacts within Iraq. They were the only Iraqi group granted permission to have a base in Amman, Jordan in 1996, when King Hussein shifted to a posture against the Iraqi leadership. The National Accord's strategy is to use its intelligence and military connections within Iraq to stage a military coup, assisted by massive bombing and air cover from Anglo-American air forces.

For previews and
information on
LaRouche publications:

Visit EIR's Internet Website!

- Highlights of current issues of EIR
- Pieces by Lyndon LaRouche
- Every week: transcript and audio of the latest **EIR Talks** radio interview.

<http://www.larouchepub.com>

e-mail: larouche@larouchepub.com