

Iraq Interim Government Can't Be the Servant of Two Masters

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

The handover of “sovereignty” from the U.S. occupation forces’ Coalition Provisional Authority to the Iraqi interim government, on June 28, cast the latter in the role of Carlo Goldini’s “servant of two masters,” a role which would challenge the most dextrous of actors. One might think that Iraqi interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi were typecast for the part, considering his history as Saddam Hussein’s intelligence agent, tasked with spying on Iraqi students in England, and his subsequent deployment as an agent of both British and American intelligence. But even he is finding it arduous.

Allawi is caught on the horns of a dilemma: On the one hand, he must show the occupation that his government is a faithful puppet; and, on the other, he must strive to convince the Iraqi people, and the world, that it is an independent authority. One farcical episode captures the essence: On July 18, an American airstrike hit sites in Fallujah allegedly used by al-Qaeda-linked foreign fighters, killing 14 people. Allawi, who had authorized the attack, made known that his prior approval was intended to show Iraq’s sovereignty. “We worked with the government, the government was fully informed about these matters, agreed with us on the need to take the action; we conducted the action,” U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said during a news conference. “We didn’t just strike off on our own; a sovereign nation had to agree.”

This Iraqi government, torn between two masters, has proven to be paralyzed. Although the prime minister, and interim President Sheikh Ghazi al-Yawar, promised that an amnesty would be issued to resistance fighters in an act of national reconciliation, it has not yet been declared. At the same time, the government stated its intention to restore the death penalty and declare martial law.

No wonder, then, that the prime targets of the growing resistance have become members of the interim government, or police and other security forces associated with it. The Green Zone, where the interim government offices, as well as the American and British embassies, are located, was the target of a car bombing, which killed 10 and wounded 40. On July 15, the car of interim Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari was hit by gunfire, and one official was killed, and two wounded. Zebari was not in the car. On July 17, interim Justice Minister Malik Dohan al-Hassan was the target of an assassination attempt; when his convoy was hit by a bomb explosion, five of his bodyguards were killed. He escaped injury by pure chance. Provincial governors have also been targeted.

Resistance Holds Some Cities

Reports by those few journalists who manage to travel outside Baghdad, have documented that the Iraqi police stations, especially in the South, have been systematically targeted by the resistance, and destroyed. Hundreds of would-be police have died.

The resistance to the occupying forces and their Iraqi allies shows no signs of abating. On the contrary: Inside the Sunni triangle, the cities of Ramadi, Fallujah, and Samarra are in the hands of the resistance, which will continue its attacks as long as it considers the country occupied—until the last foreign soldier has left. And there is no perspective on the horizon for such an eventuality. Not only are the American and British forces not reducing their presence; they are beefing it up, while seeking assistance from other nations. They have set no deadline for really ending the occupation.

Scott Ritter, a UN weapons inspector in Iraq from 1991-



The late-June “sovereignty transfer” has not changed the situation in Iraq, despite fanfare about everything from martial law to amnesty. American and British troops remain the occupation power, just as embattled by the resistance, and destroying more buildings than they build, as here in Baqubah. Reconstruction remains at a standstill, oil exports at or below pre-invasion levels.

98 and a harsh critic of the war and occupation, presented a sobering picture of the military situation in an op-ed to the *International Herald Tribune* on July 23. Bluntly titled, “Saddam’s People Are Winning the War,” Ritter’s commentary predicted that the Allawi government is “doomed to fail,” no matter how many American troops are deployed. “The more it fails,” he wrote, “the more it will have to rely on the United States to prop it up. The more the United States props up Allawi, the more discredited he will become in the eyes of the Iraqi people—all of which creates yet more opportunities for the Iraqi resistance to exploit.”

Ritter’s assessment of the strength and nature of the Iraqi resistance—which coheres with reports provided by *EIR* sources—is that, far from being a rag-tag operation of a handful of Saddam Hussein loyalists, it is a well-trained, well-prepared, nationally coordinated force, which had been put together consciously years earlier to do the job it is now doing. Ritter stressed the fact that Ba’ath Party leader Saddam Hussein, in the 1990s, shifted his secular, nationalist ideological stance, to embrace radical Islam in a deliberate effort to co-opt emerging Islamist forces. This process was “largely unnoticed in the West.” If the United States earlier believed that the resistance were made up exclusively of Saddam loyalists, it soon had to change its tune, and speak, as the Pentagon does today, of a “marriage of convenience” between the loyalists and Islamists.

But this, too, is wrong, Ritter said. “U.S. policy in Iraq is still unable or unwilling to face the reality of the enemy on the ground.” Not a “marriage of convenience,” but “rather a product of years of planning. Rather than being absorbed

by a larger Islamist movement, Saddam’s former lieutenants are calling the shots in Iraq, having co-opted the Islamic fundamentalists years ago, with or without their knowledge.”

Ritter, noting that there was no formal surrender of Iraqi forces on April 9, 2003, wrote that they simply “melted into the population,” then re-emerged. He identified the leaders of this resistance as several top names in the former regime, listed as wanted, but never apprehended. They include former Vice President Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, and his deputy, the former head of the Directorate of General Security (DGS). The offices of this DGS, which Ritter had searched in his capacity as arms inspector, were full of documents on those working with it. “There is not a person, family, tribe, or Islamic movement in Iraq that the DGS does not know intimately,” he reported, “information that is an invaluable asset when coordinating and facilitating a popular-based resistance movement.” The resistance leaders also count among their number, Hani al-Tilfah, former director of the Special Security organization, and Taher Habbush, former head of the Iraqi Intelligence Service “that perfected the art of improvising explosive devices and using them to carry out assassinations.”

Thus it is the case, as Ritter wrote, that “the recent anti-American attacks in Fallujah and Ramadi were carried out by well-disciplined men fighting in cohesive units, most likely drawn from the ranks of Saddam’s Republican Guard.”

Regional Security

Not willing to face the fact of the indigenous resistance, U.S. authorities, echoed by the Allawi crew, have endlessly

repeated the mantra that it is a matter of “outside agitators”; e.g., al-Qaeda “terrorists,” who have infiltrated through Iran and Syria in particular. Although this is a fairy tale aimed at blocking out the uncomfortable reality of the resistance, it is the case that, since the war, Iraq’s borders have been open. Coalition Provisional Authority head Paul Bremer’s order to disband the Iraqi military and security apparatus, removed those forces who had earlier secured Iraq’s borders.

In his “LaRouche Doctrine,” Lyndon LaRouche stressed the importance of a new U.S. policy of treating Southwest Asia as a whole, and declaring American strategic interest to be in establishing security and stability in the entire region. He identified Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Egypt as keystone states in this region, whose cooperation in contributing to regional security should be acknowledged by the United States.

On July 21-22, the foreign ministers of these four nations met in Cairo, along with their counterparts from the remaining neighboring states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Jordan), the first such meeting since the June 28 transfer. The top item on the agenda was border security. Iraqi interim Foreign Minister Zebari spoke of “ideas and proposals” he had to make to Arab and Islamic countries, “especially with regard to border and joint security cooperation in order to protect the common borders.” The agreement struck at the meeting, was that all would beef up their border surveillance, and, in some cases, institute joint controls. Such an understanding had already been reached between Iraq and Syria, prior to the meeting; and Iran has sealed its border with Iraq.

Another decision made at the meeting, was to convoke a conference of the interior ministers of the same countries, to be held on an as-yet-unspecified date in Tehran, on the invitation of Iran. This venue is extremely significant, considering the past feuds that have poisoned relations among many of those present—including, of course, the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88.

Contrary to press previews of the Cairo talks, the foreign ministers did not discuss deploying troops to Iraq. The issue had been raised publicly by Jordanian King Abdallah II in June, who, following a visit to the United States, had offered Jordanian troops, if the Iraqi government requested them. At the time, Allawi and others declined the offer, making the right decision, albeit for the wrong reasons. The Iraqis’ motivation, explicitly stated by Zebari, was that they charged neighboring states with interfering in Iraq’s internal affairs, a charge difficult to back up. But the decision was sound, for many reasons: first, Iraq needs no more foreign troops; indeed, it needs none at all. The presence of the occupying forces, as Iranian Foreign Minister Kharrazi has repeatedly stressed, is the main reason for the conflict in the country now. Furthermore, troops sent in by Syria, Jordan, or Egypt would be viewed by the Iraqi population as occupation forces, this time with an Arab face. Suspicions of their pretensions to Arab leadership would be immediate. The suggestion, furthermore,

that Iran or Turkey should be deployed in Iraq, is unthinkable, for obvious political and ethnic reasons. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, former adversaries in war (like Iran), would be no more welcome. Whatever political differences currently exist among Iraq’s neighbors, they all agree on one fundamental point: Every effort must be made to stabilize the region, and avoid further war.

The only proposal regarding troop deployments came from Allawi, who suggested that troops from an Arab or Muslim country outside the immediate area could provide security for the new UN mission. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Aboul Geit told reporters, when asked, “Egypt will not send forces in any case.” With that, the matter was closed.

The Role of Iran

Iran’s role in stabilizing the process is obvious to any informed observer. EU foreign policy advisor Javier Solana, as well as several UN spokesmen, have lauded Iran’s role. Even an Iraqi diplomat, Rend al-Rahim Francke, who heads Iraq’s mission to the UN, in an Associated Press interview on July 19, rejected claims that Iran was destabilizing Iraq. “Iran is not the cause of instability in Iraq,” she said, adding that “Iran could have a disruptive role, and the fact that it is not, is positive.”

In light of this fact, and recognizing the political weight Iran has in the region, one would expect Washington to accommodate. Instead, the barking and bellowing of the mad dogs has only grown louder. Leaks to the press regarding statements in the 9/11 Commission report, according to which al-Qaeda elements passed through Iranian territory between 1999 and 2001, have been seized upon to launch a new round of accusations against Tehran, beginning with President Bush. Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) is pursuing an Iran Liberation Act (on the model of the legislation which set up the Ahmed Chalabi operation in Iraq). The London *Times* of July 24 ran a story, that the Bush Administration, if re-elected, would target Iran for overthrow and military action. The following day, the paper reported on Israeli plans for an attack.

At the same time, however, a contrary signal was sent by the New York Council on Foreign Relations, whose leading lights Zbigniew Brzezinski and Robert Gates called for dialogue with Iran.

Such conflicting signals are being read in Tehran as a hard cop-soft cop show. The threats, whether from the United States or Israel, are being taken deadly seriously. The Iranian defense minister made clear that any Israeli military move would be met with massive retaliation. And, as Iranian officials have pointed out, such Rambo posturing from Washington only strengthens the hand of the arch-conservatives in Iran, those whom the American neo-conservatives would allegedly like to remove from power. The more bellicose language is used, the more political leaders in Iran see through that game being played.