

Iraq Chaos Confronts The Region: What To Do?

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

A month and a half after American tanks rolled into Baghdad and “conquered” it, anarchy has conquered the sure-fire scenarios of Defense Secretary Rumsfeld’s “chicken-hawk intelligence agency,” which promised a quick regime change to a pro-American Iraqi government that would pressure other Arab states and flood the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) with America-Israel-earmarked oil. The fact that a new UN resolution was passed on May 22, acknowledging the occupying powers and lifting sanctions, has not made the scenarios any more real.

The country, although officially “occupied,” is not under the control of the occupiers. Borders to neighboring Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Jordan are not controlled on the Iraqi side. Major cities, beginning with the capital, are under the law of the gun; virtually every citizen is armed, criminal gangs roam the streets, robbing pedestrians and vehicles alike; looting and arson continue. Vengeance killings are taking place, wherein lynch mobs seek out and kill persons said to be Ba’ath Party officials. Up to 70-80% of the civilian population is unemployed. Among those who have jobs, salaries have not been paid since before the war.

The steps announced by the new U.S. administrator Paul Bremer to restore order, are dubious. On May 14, it was announced that a “far more muscular approach” would be adopted, including the order for troops to shoot looters. On May 21, coalition officials announced that Bremer was about to issue a proclamation, telling Iraqi citizens to turn over their automatic weapons, heavy weapons, or be arrested.

The state of lawlessness has made it impossible for humanitarian aid organizations to operate. Their personnel require military escorts to reach their destinations, and military protection for their depots in Baghdad and other cities. U.S. military forces have denied requests for this protection. As a result, even minimal medical and food supplies are lacking, while reports of cholera in Basra have been confirmed.

Oil production is not functioning either. In Kirkuk, law and order has not been restored, as Kurds continue to practice ethnic cleansing—evicting, and in many cases, killing Arabs living there. In this situation, engineers tasked to repair and upgrade oil production facilities are not able to work, since their security is not guaranteed. Again, military forces are either unwilling or unable to protect them. As a result, plans to produce 1.5 million barrels per day by June, have been

postponed. This is serious, since Iraq relies on the oil from Kirkuk for its domestic needs. In addition, the Kurds, who have been taking a percentage off all oil exported through their region, are deprived of these revenues, which can hurt their ability to maintain their communities.

Iraq Needs a Government

If the occupying forces cannot or will not establish order (as is required by the Geneva Conventions), then some other governing force should do so. The new UN resolution states that the United States and Great Britain will remain in control of Iraq “until an internationally recognized, representative government is established.” But when? Hopes were dashed on May 16, when Paul Bremer, the new “proconsul” sent in to replace Gen. Jay Garner, back-pedaled on promises to form such a government. Bremer said he would oversee the creation of an “interim authority,” which, however, would not have any power.

The reaction on the part of the would-be Iraqi government members was immediate and adamant. Representatives of all the major Iraqi political and religious groups met in Baghdad on May 20, with David Manning, a foreign policy advisor to British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and delivered him a policy paper for Blair. They registered their frustration at the fact that, despite their participation in pre-war sessions, in London and the United States, during which they were told they would participate in a future government coalition, they now are being told there will not be one. The lame excuse which Manning gave them, was that, in order to gain support for the UN resolution for lifting sanctions, the occupying powers had to present an authority capable of selling oil, dealing with frozen Iraqi assets, etc. This, he said, an interim Iraqi authority “was deemed insufficient” to do, according to news reports.

At the meeting, Hoshiyar Zebari, speaking for Kurdish Democratic Party (DPK) leader Massoud Barzani, said the occupying forces need “a political partner” in Iraq, and warned that if there were no government, there would be a popular backlash, as well as possible attempts by neighbors to fill the vacuum. Jalal Talabani of the Kurdish Patriotic Union (PUK) party referred to Manning as “our former masters,” alluding to the British occupation of Iraq in 1920. He said that setting up an “interim authority” “will deprive Iraq of independence, sovereignty, and diplomatic relations, which is not good for you or for us.” Finally, Ali Bayati, the London representative of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the largest and most powerful formation, said, “If we don’t give Iraq the sovereignty they need, this will create instability in Iraq, and that instability will run through to the whole region as well.”

The meeting with Manning gave a good indication of the predicament in which the occupying forces find themselves. They cannot handle the situation in post-Saddam Iraq with the numbers and kinds of troops they currently have deployed. If they significantly increase their military presence, this will

only provoke greater resistance in the population, which is fiercely independent. In fact, Ahmed Chalabi, who heads the Iraqi National Congress (INC), and who is the leading quivering candidate, admitted during the meeting with Manning, that the occupying forces would be taking a risk in establishing an interim Iraqi government, “since no government would have complete authority in the presence of hundreds of thousands” of troops, who would be the real power needed to protect borders, secure the oil fields, and ward off neighboring meddlers. The *New York Times* reported that Chalabi “said, the allies seem afraid to take a risk on an indigenous Iraqi leadership.” Chalabi heaped praise on the American and British forces, saying he wanted them to “stay a long time”; however, he warned that failure to set up a government would backfire. “We do not want to make your presence here an issue,” he said.

Yet this is already the issue. None of the Iraqi political leaders (except Chalabi) will accept occupation. Nor will they accept a puppet government. They are demanding the establishment of an independent, sovereign Iraqi government. The forces to constitute such a coalition exist: They include the Shi’ite community, which represents 60% of the Iraqi population, whose leading political organization is the SCIRI; the two Kurdish parties, DPK and PUK; and Sunni forces, some of whom are represented in the INC. All these organizations have a real base in the population, and the religious groupings have in-depth social networks and structures, capable of establishing order.

No ‘Long Arm of Iran’ at Work

This was demonstrated during the mass celebrations in Kerbala on May 4; and it was again displayed during demonstrations in Baghdad on May 19. The significance of the latter event lies in the manifest unity between Shi’ite and Sunni leaders and people. Demonstrators started off at the Sunni mosque Abu Hanifa, where Sunni leader Ahmed Kubaisi spoke, then proceeded to the other side of the city, to the Shi’a shrine at Kadimiya. Underlining the unity between Shi’ites and Sunnis, the demonstrators called for an independent government of national unity. Their basic attitude was expressed by Shi’ite Abdul Majid Hakim of the SCIRI, a few days earlier: If the United States doesn’t accept an interim government of Iraqis, then the Iraqis will call for civil disobedience.

One figure who seems to be working behind the scenes to bring together an organic coalition of Iraqi leaders, is Sunni Adnan Pachachi, an 80-year-old former foreign minister of Iraq (1957-65), who is calling for a national unity government. Pachachi, who reportedly has the backing of the United Arab Emirates and the Saudis (who also support Kubaisi), wants a government to be chosen through UN-organized elections.

This is something the United States is committed to preventing. Thus the procrastination about planning a national conference of leaders to select a government—now pushed

back at least to mid-July. The official line coming out of Washington is that if elections were held, “the Shi’ites” would take over, and the government would be nothing but the long arm of neighboring Iran, a Shi’ite nation. The scare story features the danger of an Iranian-style Islamic revolution taking over in Baghdad.

None of this corresponds to reality. In fact, none of the Shi’ite groups—not even the SCIRI—wants an Iranian-style government for Iraq. Inside Iran, virtually no one wants it either. The scare stories have been cooked up as a means of justifying the sabotage of an actually representative and independent government. As the leading Iraq expert in Germany, Aziz Alkazaz, told *EIR*, America must know it cannot eliminate Islam from the country, and should know that no one wants an Islamic republic in Iraq. The Iraqi Shi’ites cannot, and will not, function as the “long arm of Iran” inside Iraq. Furthermore, he said, one should know that the Iraqi

Shi’ites have an historical precedent—the fight against Britain, going back to 1920. That, and not the Iranian revolution of 1979, is the historical impulse now being felt.

The mess created by the U.S.-led aggression threatens to get worse, and to spread, unless order is restored. The occupying powers will try to use the new UN resolution to legitimize the war, and to make their presence permanent, although the resolution calls for a UN “review” after 12 months. The longer the foreign military remains, the greater the Iraqi resistance will be; recent incidents, including the killing of two U.S. soldiers in Baghdad, and the shooting on a military vehicle in Falluja on May 22, are signs of things to come.

The internal situation is characterized by the “Catch-22”—that the Iraqis will not accept occupation, and the occupiers will not allow an independent sovereign government.

What Middle East Leaders Can Do Now

The author had the opportunity on May 17, to deliver a lecture at the Center for Asian Studies at the Cairo University, on the post-war situation and the perspectives for changing American foreign policy. The fear that policy-makers in the region face, was apparent. The author’s main point was that the prevailing response in the region—to seek a compromise, to make concessions to the U.S. war party, or even to capitulate to it outright—is dangerous and wrong. Unless the fascist policy pursued by the current coup faction in Washington were defeated, it would bring global destruction.

The speech stressed that one should recognize that the war party represents a minority whose economic base is crumbling. There are forces both inside the United States and internationally, associated with Lyndon LaRouche, which are mobilizing to make a Constitutional “counter-coup” against the chicken-hawks, to reorient U.S. foreign policy along the lines of the best of the American tradition. Thus, the challenge is to organize politically with this counter-coup process.

The 13-year history of the “new” pre-emptive war doctrine (including its nuclear aspect) was presented, along with the personnel involved in “Cheney’s gang,” their common Straussian fascist philosophy, and their “new Roman Empire” project. All this was elaborated in the light of LaRouche’s Presidential campaign foreign policy paper, “A World of Sovereign Nation-States” (see *EIR*, May 16), as well as recent moves toward this

perspective among Eurasian nations.

Prof. Mohammed Selim, director of the Center for Asian Studies, emphasized the factor of deception involved in the war party’s operations, beginning with the Sept. 11, 2001 coup, which has remained shrouded in lies. Professor Selim raised other questions regarding U.S. foreign policy in the context of LaRouche’s approach to it; this was followed by hours of questions and answers by the conference participants.

The central issue of the discussion boiled down to the political choices before the American people in the 2004 elections: What will a change from a Republican to a Democratic administration mean, and can it be made? What does the future hold for Bush? The gathering of intellectuals, politicians, think-tankers, journalists, and military figures was remoralized by the knowledge, that an effective opposition does exist inside the United States. LaRouche’s current activities in orchestrating the “counter-coup” and also organizing international combinations around solutions to the underlying economic crisis, generated great interest.

Such a discussion encapsulates the dynamic at work now in the Middle East/Persian Gulf region. Although the shock of the war is still great, there is a readiness to look reality in the face. This involves grasping the grave dangers posed by the continuing hegemony of the monster in Washington; but, precisely for this reason, it also involves taking up the alternatives available, and working with them to effect a fundamental shift. If Middle East political figures and organizations help effect such a fundamental shift through LaRouche’s leadership, then, ironically, it may turn out that the illegal war against Iraq will have led to the final defeat of its perpetrators, and their imperial policy.

—Muriel Mirak-Weissbach