

Iraq: Occupation and Sectarianism

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At the outset of the Occupation, it was clear that the U.S. would rule Iraq by breaking the country into mini states or regions and dividing the Iraqi population on ethnic and sectarian lines. The Occupation-orchestrated violence between Iraqis was meant to provide a pretext for the long-term occupation of Iraq, and direct Iraqis anger away from the brutality and violence of the Occupation.

While on his recent unannounced (secretly sneak in) visit to Baghdad, Jack Straw, the British Foreign Secretary echoed the comment of the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. Straw said; “we are keen to see these two departments [defence and interior] in the hands of competent people, probably technocrats”, some one like Ahmed Chalabi or Iyad Allawi. The comment had nothing to do with stopping the violence in Iraq but much to do with the exercise of total US control on the Iraqi army and police. The latter could then be used against opponents of the Occupation. Indeed, those who are involved in violence against Iraqis are working hand-in-glove with the occupying forces. Jack Straw is in Iraq to perpetuate more violence and more bloodshed.

It started with the deliberate destruction and dismantling of the Iraqi State, and the appointment on July 13, 2003 of the so-called Iraq Governing Council by U.S. Proconsul L. Paul Bremer. The appointees – mostly expatriate quislings – were deliberately chosen and identified according to ethnic and sectarian criteria. They were encouraged and promoted to compete for power and positions. Moreover, Paul Bremer initiated the criminal process of “De-Baathification”, which implied the liquidation of anyone associated with the Ba’ath Party as well as anyone with anti-Occupation nationalist views. “De-Baathification” is simply a murderous tool for inciting violence and destroying Iraqi society.

To cement these divisions within Iraqi society, the U.S. and its allies staged illegitimate and fraudulent elections. The latter were designed to establish sectarianism – not ‘democracy’ – as well as legitimise the Occupation. Iraqis were promoted and encouraged to vote based on their religious and ethnic affiliations. Both the electoral system and the methods of voter mobilization applied by major players were meant to fan the flames of sectarianism rather than contribute to national unity and liberation. There were no candidates or political parties with political ideologies, just religious and ethnic slates. In addition, the U.S.-drafted Constitution was there to cement and legitimise these various divisions. One wonders why Britain and the U.S. do not have the same ‘democratic’ system at home.

Another U.S. trigger for civil strife and security chaos in Iraq was the deliberate and criminal act of dissolving the Iraqi army and security forces and replacing them with ethnic and sectarian-based militias. U.S.-trained militia, Iranian-trained militia and Israeli-trained Kurdish *Peshmerga* form the bulk of the new Iraqi army and police. Their lack of loyalty to the Iraqi nation as well as the rivalries and hostilities between these various militia

ultimately serve the interests of U.S. forces. These paramilitary groups are deployed to fight their Iraqi brothers belonging to different ethnic areas. This process thereby served to create ethnic tension and division. Together with U.S. forces, the *Peshmerga* militia continue to perform arbitrary arrests, they are involved in brutal treatment of civilians, violations of residents' rights and the theft of properties. They are responsible for acts of deliberate ethnic cleansing in the regions of Tel Afar, Kirkuk and Mosul. It is all part of a U.S. policy of creating sectarian violence which eventually will lead to "civil war" and circumstances which will be used to justify the ongoing Occupation.

Furthermore, [death squads](#) trained and armed by the Occupation forces are torturing and murdering innocent Iraqis, including prominent Iraqi politicians, nationalist leaders, Iraqi academics and professionals. Even Iraqis who participated in the 1980s war to defend Iraq against the Iran are being targeted. The thugs are eliminating all those who are opposed to the Occupation.

This deliberate violence, which has swept Iraq since the invasion, has largely contributed to the [disintegration](#) of Iraqi society. This murderous campaign is based on the "El Salvador Option" - a U.S.-created and financed "civil war" in El Salvador in the 1980s. The El Salvador Option was replicated in Iraq by John Negroponte. It has the full approval of the White House. Its aim is to terrorise the Iraqi population and enforce the Occupation.

Thousands of innocent Iraqis have been murdered in cold blood. A report by an Iraqi human rights group, [Monitoring Net of Human Rights in Iraq](#) noted that:

"Iraqi police sources revealed that till the end of March 2004 more than 1,000 Iraqi scientists were shot. A report, which was previously published by the U.S. State Department, confirmed the killing of 350 scientists specialized in nuclear science and 200 professors".

After the recent criminal attack on the Askariyah shrine in Samarra - which has never been attacked for centuries -, all Iraqis without exception have condemned the attack. "This is a terrorist act that is aimed to fan a sectarian strife among Iraqis", said Sheikh Ahmed Daye, member of the Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars. The Occupation-appointed president Jalal Talabani said: "We are facing a major conspiracy that is targeting Iraq's unity. We should all stand hand in hand to prevent the danger of a civil war". Others in the puppet government have pointed the finger at the U.S. Ambassador in Baghdad for inciting the violence and for interfering in Iraqi political and domestic affairs. Thousands of ordinary Iraqis took to the streets throughout Iraq denouncing the U.S. and Israel.

Samarra is like Fallujah. U.S. forces have attacked the Resistance city several times, and Donald Rumsfeld has threatened the city with destruction unless it surrenders. Iraqis believe that the attack is a pretext for the U.S. forces to invade the city. The attack was not something new; similar attacks were perpetuated against other Iraqi cities in the past. These attacks were well-orchestrated to provoke one group of Iraqis against the other, and bring in U.S. forces as "peace brokers".

Immediately after the attack on the Askariyah shrine, violence erupted in several localities in Iraq. Only the U.S. and Britain stand to benefit from the violence and bloodshed.

Iraqi sources argue that U.S. and British forces and their collaborators are behind every major sectarian killing and kidnapping in the country. After every act of killing of civilians, a specific Iraqi community is deliberately blamed for the violence. "[W]e have widespread

evidence that the outside forces are attempting to instigate a civil war here and Iraqis are conscious of that and have made determined effort not to respond to it”, said Dr. Saad Jawad, a political scientist at Baghdad University.

The arrest by Iraqi Police last September of two British undercover soldiers identified as “SAS elite special forces” and disguised as Arabs planning to detonate explosives-packed car in the centre of Basra was a case of Western perpetuated terrorism.

Bush and Blair have often used the pretext of preventing “civil war” to counter Iraqi demands for troops’ withdrawal. It is the old colonial cliché: The more the natives are divided, the easier to rule them and exploit them.

These divisions are not internal. We are not dealing with “an internal problem”: it is a Western-created problem. The war on Iraq is a act of aggression responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi men, women and children. It constitutes a war crime committed to enhance U.S.-Israel domination of the Middle East and seize control of Iraq’s oil reserves.

The sectarian violence in Iraq has been deliberately created by the U.S. and Britain. Iraqis have overwhelmingly rejected the presence of foreign occupying forces. The only way to end the violence is to respect the wishes of the Iraqi people by implementing a full and immediate withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraq.

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