

“Iraq’s oil wealth is in the hands of Washington, while Iraqi go hungry,” Interview with Hussein Askary

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Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Sudani [wants American troops to leave Iraq](#). The US public might think the US-UK war in Iraq is long over, and the dictator is gone because American soldiers gave their lives to give Iraqis their freedom and democracy. The US media may have convinced them of that story, but the truth is far different than the propaganda. The US invaded, destroyed, killed thousands, and left the country in worse shape than before.

Instead of an American inspired form of democracy, the invaders from Washington imposed a non-democratic form of government, in which the religion you were born into is tied to your political and social rights. The US removed a Sunni president of Iraq, and replaced him with a Shite led government, and then wondered why would Baghdad and Tehran be good friends? The US military continues to occupy Iraq despite their leaders and Parliament asking “Yankee Go Home”.

Repeated deadly attacks in Iraq by the US military on the orders of President Joe Biden have broken the Baghdad-Washington relationship to a point of no return. US VP Dick Cheney swooped into oil-rich Iraq to loot the country of its energy resources in 2003; however, we thought in 2024 that was a vague memory, but are shocked to find that Iraq has never recovered from the war, despite being a major oil producer. The White House today is still holding the keys to the Iraqi oil revenues, while the Iraqi people are held hostage to US and Iraq corrupt elite.

Steven Sahiounie of MidEastDiscourse interviewed Hussein Askary to get his take on the various issues surrounding Iraq today.

Hussein Askary, a Swedish and Iraqi citizen (Born in Baghdad 1968), is a founding board member and Vice-President of the Belt and Road Institute in Sweden (2018). Askary has a background as an economic and strategic analyst at the International Schiller Institute (headquarters in Germany) since 1996.

Steven Sahiounie (SS): America attacked numerous resistance groups in Iraq, and Baghdad asked the American military to leave Iraq. In your opinion, what is the status?

Hussein Askary (HA): The status in Iraq is determined by the special “Strategic Framework Agreement” imposed by the United States on Iraq in 2008 before allegedly withdrawing from Iraq in 2011. This was a fake withdrawal, since the U.S. keeps large numbers of troops, and its embassy in Baghdad is a military fortress in itself. The United States practices hands-on control of Iraqi politics and Iraqi politicians through two channels: Firstly, control of all Iraqi oil revenues that are transferred from the importing countries to a bank account in the U.S. Federal Reserve bank in New York. While the account belongs to Iraq, it is controlled by the American President through [Executive Order 13303](#) signed by George W Bush after the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

This means that the Iraqi government has no control over its revenues, and is dependant on the mercy of the American Administration to receive money to feed the Iraqi people month by month. Secondly, the U.S., British and other governments have enough assets in Iraq, from the highest levels of different parties to the lowest in the street, to wreak havoc and create turmoil in the country at any moment. Therefore, even if the government states in words that it wants the U.S. troops to leave, it is only for internal consumption and has no effect in reality.

SS: Turkey continues to attack the north of Iraq resulting in death and injuries. In your opinion, why doesn't the US stop Turkey?

HA: The geopolitics of the region is thus that different powers have a division of labour and roles. For the U.S., to have Turkey as an ally, it has to make certain concessions for Turkish power ambitions in the region. Turkey is using the abnormal situation created in both Iraq and Syria by the U.S. for its own geopolitical and economic advantage. But this is kind of short term thinking is imprudent and will damage Turkey in the long run, when the U.S. shifts its focus to other areas.

SS: The Iraqi resistance has supported the [Palestinian resistance since October 7](#). From your point of view, will this support affect the Iraqi relationship with the west?

HA: Yes, it has affected, and the reason behind targeting the leaders of certain Iraqi resistance groups was a signal for the Iraqi government to try to restrain these groups from showing support for the Palestinian people. The U.S. government has been exerting excruciating pressure on the Iraqi government to do that through the restriction of Iraqi banks access to Iraqi oil dollars.

SS: Iraq has a lot of petroleum resources and yet it faces poverty. From your point of view, can Iraq recover, and what will it take?

HA: Iraq can only recover when it regains its sovereignty and free itself from American economic and financial occupation. Iraq needs to regain control over its oil revenues from the U.S. Administration. Then direct these revenues for a national reconstruction and

industrialization project in cooperation with China along the Belt and Road Initiative, and with the BRICS and Global South. Iraq's poverty and economic backwardness is due to lack of infrastructure, education, and healthcare which was destroyed by the Anglo-American occupation. The Western powers have also fostered a massive corrupt elite, which is profiting itself on the expense of the Iraqi people. Iraq has enormous resources, both natural and human, and a fantastic geographical location to become a major agro-industrial power in the region.

SS: The US and Iran have used Iraq as a staging ground for the last 23 years in a proxy war. In your opinion, what can Baghdad do to change this situation?

HA: The roots of the problem arise from the original operation of invading Iraq in 2003, which included a measure of "creative destruction", including the changing of the Iraqi constitution and political structure turning it into an ethnic and sectarian division on fake parliamentary democratic premisses. This unruly and chaotic system of governance is kept together through consensus among the elites of the ethnic and sectarian groups who think more about their local power than about the interest of the nation. This artificial structure created after and through the American-British occupiers, is one of the main obstacles that should be removed. A more representative national governance system that transcends ethnic and sectarian interests must be put in place to address the faults in the system. A clearer idea of economic development must be also discussed, because Iraq today is a pure consumer society, that extracts and sells oil to buy food and other consumer items from abroad, of course when the U.S. Administration allows them to do that.

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