

## Iraq - The Logic of Withdrawal.

A Review of Anthony Arnove's most recent book

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With George Bush having General Petraeus tell him that success is possible in Iraq “although doing so will be neither quick nor easy,” and with his own speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars that rewrote the history book on the Vietnamese war with some strange twists of conjecture, it would appear that the U.S. is settling in for the long haul in Iraq. In a similar vein, Ambassador Ryan Crocker called Iraq “a traumatized society,” adding to the old tired excuse that the U.S. cannot quit the war as the Iraqis themselves are not capable of managing their own affairs. The essential message becomes the same as in Vietnam: the Iraqis are not capable of working things out themselves and in order to give them freedom and democracy, we need to continue fighting the insurgency that mysteriously continues to battle on. Nowhere does the message go out that, yes, “we” are the problem, “we” started it (leaving aside for the moment all the arguments about illegality, lies and deception, and oil), and “we” should get out and go home and let the Iraqis work out their problems on their own or with the assistance of their neighbours and perhaps the sidelined UN.

It is at this point the Anthony Arnove’s book (second edition) Iraq – The Logic of Withdrawal, becomes very timely. It is a clear, well written work, a short read that presents arguments in a concise and well-referenced manner. In order to get to the ‘logic of withdrawal’ Arnove presents strong summary chapters on the overall picture of what has and is happening in Iraq. From that it could be considered a ‘primer’ on what has occurred in Iraq, historically from the fall of the Ottoman Empire, through to the period of U.S. involvement since the Second World War, continuing on into current events with the protracted ‘sanction’ phase against Iraq followed by the deceit of the current war.

In the introduction Arnove recognizes that Iraq matters to the U.S., that a defeat will be “far more significant” than that in Vietnam, as it would be a reversal of a long applied geostrategy to control the Middle East. Further, it signifies that the U.S. has “run up against the limits of empire,” and that “popular forces” within the civilian, military and international world need to “force the U.S. government to this conclusion.” He looks even further and sees a larger challenge, “the need to transform the irrational economic and political system that led to the wars...and that is today directly threatening the survival of the human species.”

In “A War of Choice”, Arnove discusses the issues of legality and international law, of manipulation of information, oil, Kuwait and the 1990s sanctions, and the message given to the world by the invasion. From there he presents the current situation with topics on infrastructure conditions (water, power, hospitals), the economic impacts of foreign workers, corporations, the idealized neoliberal open market restructuring, personal safety reflecting tactics used by Israelis to disenfranchise Palestinians, and then into torture and the creation

of the 'other', the non-person without rights, protection, and subject to all kinds of atrocities outside the reach of the law.

The ever-recurring theme of "The New White Man's Burden" highlights the arguments that the U.S. makes about its morality and benevolence towards the world, a world in which the 'other' is not capable of governing themselves. He uses Canada's now resident political pundit Michael Ignatieff who argues for the cause of imperialism, an empire whose "grace notes are free markets, human rights and democracy, enforced by the most awesome military power the world has ever known." I cannot perceive that there is any moral right, or freedom of any kind, or any but the most narrowly proscribed democracy with all that military power being the instrument of 'grace.' Neither can Arnove. He continues with the violent example of the Philippines, the racist 'logic' applied there, and how that has transferred over the years to Iraq.

Iraq's "History of Occupation" reviews the British occupation and control after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the rebellion by the Iraqis, the use of reserve troops and the first use of aerial bombing and the threat of chemical warfare (by our hero Churchill no less) against the civilian population. That history leads into the era of Saddam Hussein and the U.S. turn against him on the invasion of Kuwait.

The idea of occupying forces blaming the resident population of not being capable of governing themselves, of being savage warriors, in the case of Iraq of being 'terrorists' lacks any common sense, relying on "a long colonial legacy." "The Resistance in Iraq" begins with the idea expressed by several Americans that "we would oppose any outside interference in Iraq's road to democracy," a completely self-contradictory statement that no rationale person would accept for Iraq's transformation. Instead, "In challenging their occupation, the people of Iraq have transformed the calculus of empire." Arnove, without quoting the UN Charter, states, "The people of Iraq have very right to resist U.S. occupation," a fundamental element of the charter the U.S. has to ignore in order carry out its plans of hegemony.

After that background has been established, Arnove discusses "The Logic of Withdrawal", providing eight well-defined reasons that should seem obvious to the reader of average intelligence. His reasoning is a rebuttal to some obviously contrived and also plain and simple ignorant arguments made by the administration and its supporters (and some supposed non-supporters if the Democrats are included) as to why the U.S. should stay in Iraq. Only a racist, bigoted, non-rational and immoral thought pattern would not be able to see that the U.S. is staying in Iraq on a series of lies. In plain and simple language, Arnove states, "We should allow the people of Iraq to determining their own future....that in addition to calling for an end to military occupation," also calls "...for an end to the economic occupation of Iraq...." Highly logical, with an equally high degree of common sense as well.

Finally, in wanting "Out Now", Arnove looks at the factors that ended the Vietnam war, looks at the opposition to the war in various arenas: the first is obvious, the Iraqi resistance; the second is the military itself, based on its racist policies of recruitment; third, is growing opposition at home, emphasized by the lack of response to the on-going civil disaster in New Orleans; and ending in a series of arguments on the economic and social welfare erosion within the U.S. Ultimately, Arnove sees the relationship between home and abroad, as "The corporate looting of Iraq is simply an extension of the looting at home." There is recognition

that the factors for getting out now are not yet strong enough, but need to be strengthened across a broad front.

The afterward to the second edition extends the above arguments briefly and then considers the attitude towards Iran. The Iranian nuclear threat is simply a “smokescreen”, obvious again to anyone who understands the articles of the NPT and elBaradei’s reports from the IAEA, as the real motivation “in Iran – as in Iraq – are energy, geography, and geopolitics.” The reality of the current and perhaps subsequent administrations is that any conjecture that relies “on the intelligence, rationality, or humanity of U.S. policymakers would be an unwise one.”

Arnove has presented very basic forthright arguments that support the immediate withdrawal of the U.S. military apparatus (and I use that, as Arnove intends, to include the economic side of it as well) from Iraq. The very fundamental lies that the U.S. administration uses to support its ideology are easily rebutted, yet the ongoing self-contradictory statements continue to run like drivel from the political warriors in government positions. Iraq – The Logic of Withdrawal is a wonderfully concise primer for those looking for the obvious rationale (apart from the moral gut feeling) as to why the U.S. should quit Iraq.

*Jim Miles is a Canadian educator and a regular contributor/columnist of opinion pieces and book reviews to Palestine Chronicles. His interest in this topic stems originally from an environmental perspective, which encompasses the militarization and economic subjugation of the global community and its commodification by corporate governance and by the American government.*

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