

## The Iraqi Constitution; a cynical cover for partition

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Global Research, October 15, 2005  
[opednews.com](http://opednews.com) 15 October 2005

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Today's vote on the Iraqi Constitution is the culmination of 15 years of unrelenting aggression against the Iraqi people. Washington has never wavered in its determination to topple Saddam and control Iraqi oil. Saturday's balloting is just another public relations stunt to disguise the criminal intention of the present occupation.

There's a straight line that runs from Gulf War 1, through the genocidal 10 year sanctions, to the present occupation. Are the American people really stupid enough to believe that this policy will change by today's referendum?

Even America's right-leaning media has conceded that the purpose of the constitution is to divide the country. So, why do we call it a constitution at all? Only in the skewed Bush-lexicon does the term "constitution" mean the same as "partition". Most of us believe that a nation's constitution should embrace the collective aspirations of its people. It should outline the commitment to civil liberties, social justice and human rights. In a democracy it should articulate the principles of representative government and the limits on executive authority.

There's nothing even remotely like this in the Iraqi constitution. It was drawn up mainly to appease the Shi'ites and the Kurds in their hopes for regional autonomy, to exclude the Sunnis from future oil wealth, and to incite civil war. Bush had no intention of delivering a constitution that protected the integrity or sovereignty of a unified Iraq. What he has produced are the articles of succession, not a constitution. By this same rationale, Bush would have supported the cause of the Confederacy prior to our own Civil War.

It is not within the legal authority of the occupying power to facilitate the break up of a sovereign nation. The vote itself is a challenge to the international community and the laws that are supposed to govern these activities.

Why hasn't the UN spoken out? Why is there no threat of boycott or sanctions or punitive action if the Bush administration goes through with this farce? What if Israel decides to follow this same prescription and sets up a Palestinian puppet to approve further annexation of the occupied territories?

This is a dangerous precedent for the world, and one that will certainly be noted by other equally conniving leaders.

The constitution paves the way for a balkanized Iraq, but there is also a more sinister motive that has escaped public attention. For weeks, the mainstream press has been parroting the Pentagon-line that the voting will trigger a civil war.

Why? Is it the intention of the administration to ignite more widespread hostilities through

the balloting?

We already know that the Shi'ites in Basra and Baghdad are nearly as angry and distrustful of their American overlords as their Sunni brothers. We also know that the Shi'ites are equally suspicious of US and British involvement in the rash of terrorist bombings sweeping across Iraq. So, why would they suddenly take up arms against their fellow countrymen?

The real reason the western media keeps reiterating the civil war mantra is to prepare the public for the intensification of hostilities against the Sunni resistance. The media is simply producing the cover for the Pentagon to act with even greater impunity. In reality, there is no danger of a civil war. Iraqis know their enemy.

It is understandable that the Iraqi people would cast a vote in the vain hope that it might change the harsh conditions of their life under occupation. But, it's inexcusable for the Ayatollah Ali-Sistani to support this American sham. It may be that the Ayatollah is simply trying to establish stronger ties with his friends in Tehran by accepting the idea of partition and an independent Shi'ite province in southern Iraq. Never the less, his cooperation has only reinforced the occupation and strengthened America's regional ambitions.

Regardless of his motives, Al-Sistani has acted like a collaborator and discredited himself as viable leader for the Iraqi people. The mantle of leadership now passes to the next in line, the fiercely-nationalistic Muqtada al-Sadr, a man who has already established his patriotic bona-fides by consistently condemning the occupation.

There should be some celebration in Washington over this latest made-for-TV democratic event, but it will undoubtedly be short-lived. Martial law is not liberation, nor is the callous destruction of the world's oldest civilization, democracy.

The constitution was designed to legitimize the occupation, but the occupation will become increasingly more tenuous as the resistance grows and Washington's cynical plan becomes more apparent.

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