

U.S. Continues War by Proxy: Playing the Al-Qaeda Card to the Last Iraqi

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International, regional and internal players vying for interests, wealth, power or influence are all beneficiaries of the “al-Qaeda threat” in Iraq and in spite of their deadly and bloody competitions they agree only on two denominators, namely that the presence of the U.S.-installed and Iran-supported sectarian government in Baghdad and its sectarian al-Qaeda antithesis are the necessary casus belli for their proxy wars, which are tearing apart the social fabric of the Iraqi society, disintegrating the national unity of Iraq and bleeding its population to the last Iraqi.

The Iraqi people seem a passive player, paying in their blood for all this Machiavellian dirty politics. The war which the U.S. unleashed by its invasion of Iraq in 2003 undoubtedly continues and the bleeding of the Iraqi people continues as well.

According to the UN Assistance Mission to Iraq , 34452 Iraqis were killed since 2008 and more than ten thousand were killed in 2013 during which suicide bombings more than tripled according to the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Brett McGurk’s recent testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. The AFP reported that more than one thousand Iraqis were killed in last January. The UN refugee agency UNHCR, citing Iraqi government figures, says that more than 140,000 Iraqis have already been displaced from Iraq ’s western province of Anbar .

Both the United States and Russia are now supplying Iraq with multi-billion arms sales to empower the sectarian government in Baghdad to defeat the sectarian “al-Qaeda threat.” They see a casus belli in al-Qaeda to regain a lost ground in Iraq, the first to rebalance its influence against Iran in a country where it had paid a heavy price in human souls and taxpayer money only for Iran to reap the exploits of its invasion of 2003 while the second could not close an opened Iraqi window of opportunity to re-enter the country as an exporter of arms who used to be the major supplier of weaponry to the Iraqi military before the U.S. invasion.

Regionally, Iraq’s ambassador to Iran Muhammad Majid al-Sheikh announced earlier this month that Baghdad has signed an agreement with Tehran “to purchase weapons and military equipment;” Iraqi Defense Minister Saadoun al-Dulaimi signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen defense and security agreements with Iran last September.

Meanwhile Syria , which is totally preoccupied with fighting a three -year old wide spread terrorist insurgency within its borders, could not but coordinate defense with the Iraq military against the common enemy of the “al-Qaeda threat” in both countries.

Counterbalancing politically and militarily, Turkey and the GCC countries led by Qatar and Saudi Arabia, in their anti-Iran proxy wars in Iraq and Syria, are pouring billions of petrodollars to empower a sectarian counterbalance by money, arms and political support, which end up empowering al-Qaeda indirectly or its sectarian allies directly, thus perpetuating the war and fueling the sectarian strife in Iraq, as a part of an unabated effort to contain Iran's expanding regional sphere of influence.

Ironically, the Turkish member of the U.S.-led NATO as well as the GCC Arab NATO non-member "partners" seem to stand on the opposite side with their U.S. strategic ally in the Iraqi war in this tragic drama of Machiavellian dirty politics.

Internally, the three major partners in the "political process" are no less Machiavellian in their exploiting of the al-Qaeda card. The self-ruled northern Iraqi Kurdistan region, which counts down for the right timing for secession, could not be but happy with the preoccupation of the central government in Baghdad with the "al-Qaeda threat." Pro-Iran Shiite sectarian parties and militias use this threat to strengthen their sectarian bond and justify their loyalty to Iran as their protector. Their Sunni sectarian rivals are using the threat to promote themselves as the "alternative" to al-Qaeda in representing the Sunnis and to justify their seeking financial, political and paramilitary support from the U.S. , GCC and Turkey , allegedly to counter the pro-Iran sectarian government in Baghdad as well as the expanding Iranian influence in Iraq and the region.

Exploiting his partners' inter-fighting, Iraqi two-term Prime Minister Nouri (or Jawad) Al-Maliki, has maneuvered to win a constitutional interpretation allowing him to run for a third term and, to reinforce his one-man show of governance, he was in Washington D.C. last November, then in Tehran the next December, seeking military "help" against the "al-Qaeda threat" and he got it.

U.S. Continues War by Proxy

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has pledged to support al-Maliki's military offensive against al-Qaeda and its offshoot the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

24 Apache helicopter with rockets and other equipment connected to them, 175 Hellfire air-to-ground missiles, ScanEagle and Raven reconnaissance drones have either already been delivered or pending delivery, among a \$4.7 billion worth of military equipment, including F-16 fighters. James Jeffrey reported in Foreign Policy last Monday that President Barak Obama's administration is "increasing intelligence and operational cooperation with the Iraqi government." The French Le Figaro reported early this week that "hundreds" of U.S. security personnel will return to Iraq to train Iraqis on using these weapons to confirm what the Pentagon spokesman, Army Col. Steve Warren, did not rule out on last January 17 when he said that "we are in continuing discussions about how we can improve the Iraqi military."

Kerry ruled out sending "American boots" on the Iraqi ground; obviously he meant "Pentagon boots," but not the Pentagon-contracted boots.

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) online on this February 3 reported that the " U.S. military support there relies increasingly on the presence of contractors." It described this strategy as "the strategic deployment of defense contractors in Iraq ." Citing State Department and Pentagon figures, the WSJ reported, "As of January 2013, the U.S. had more than 12,500 contractors in Iraq ," including some 5,000 contractors supporting the American diplomatic

mission in Iraq , the largest in the world.

It is obvious that the U.S. administration is continuing its war on Iraq by the Iraqi ruling proxies who had been left behind when the American combat mission was ended in December 2011. The administration is highlighting the “al-Qaeda threat” as casus belli as cited Brett McGurk’s testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on this February 8.

The Machiavellian support from Iran , Syria and Russia might for a while misleadingly portray al-Maliki’s government as anti - American, but it could not cover up the fact that it was essentially installed by the U.S. foreign military invasion and is still bound by a “strategic agreement” with the United States .

Political System Unfixable

However the new U.S. “surge” in “operational cooperation with the Iraqi government” will most likely not succeed in fixing “Iraq’s shattered political system,” which “our forces were unable to fix ... even when they were in Iraq in large numbers,” according to Christopher A. Preble, writing in Cato Institute online on last January 23.

“Sending David Petraeus and Ambassador (Ryan) Crocker back” to Iraq , as suggested by U.S. Sen. John McCain to CNN’s “State of the Union ” last January 12 was a disparate wishful thinking.

“ Iraq ’s shattered political system” is the legitimate product of the U.S.-engineered “political process” based on sectarian and ethnic fragmentation of the geopolitical national unity of the country. Highlighting the “al-Qaeda threat” can no more cover up the fact that the “political process” is a failure that cannot be “fixed” militarily.

Writing in Foreign Policy on this February 10, James Jeffrey said that the “United States tried to transform Iraq into a model Western-style democracy,” but “the U.S. experience in the Middle East came to resemble its long war in Vietnam.”

The sectarian U.S. proxy government in Baghdad , which has developed into an authoritarian regime, remains the bedrock of the U.S. strategic failure. The “al-Qaeda threat” is only the expected sectarian antithesis; it is a byproduct that will disappear with the collapse of the sectarian “political process.”

Iraq is now “on the edge of the abyss,” director of Middle East Studies at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), professor Gareth Stansfield, wrote on this February 3. This situation is “being laid at the door of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki,” who “is now portrayed as a divisive figure,” he said.

In their report titled “Iraq in Crisis” and published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on last January 24, Anthony H. Cordesman and Sam Khazai said that the “cause of Iraq’s current violence” is “its failed politics and system of governance,” adding that the Iraqi “election in 2010 divided the nation rather than create any form of stable democracy.”

On the background of the current status quo, Iraq’s next round of elections, scheduled for next April 30, is expected to fare worse. Writing in Al-Ahram Weekly last August 14, Salah Nasrawi said that more than 10 years after the U.S. invasion, “the much-trumpeted Iraqi

democracy is a mirage.” He was vindicated by none other than the Iraqi Speaker of the parliament Osama Al Nujaifi who was quoted by the Gulf News on last January 25 as saying during his latest visit to U.S.: “What we have now is a facade of a democracy — superficial — but on the inside it’s total chaos.”

Popular Uprising, not al-Qaeda

Al-Maliki’s government on this February 8 issued a one week ultimatum to what the governor of Anbar described as the “criminals” who “have kidnapped Fallujah” for more than a month, but Ross Caputi, a veteran U.S. Marine who participated in the second U.S. siege of Fallujah in 2004, in an open letter to U.S. Secretary Kerry published by the Global Research last Monday, said that “the current violence in Fallujah has been [misrepresented in the media.](#)”

“The Iraqi government has not been attacking al Qaeda in Fallujah,” he said, adding that Al-Maliki’s government “is not a regime the U.S. should be sending weapons to.” For this purpose Caputi attached a petition with [11,610 signatures](#). He described what is happening in the western Iraqi city as a “popular uprising.”

Embracing the same strategy the Americans used in 2007, Iran and U.S. Iraqi proxies have now joined forces against a “popular uprising” that Fallujah has just become only a symbol. Misleadingly pronouncing al-Qaeda as their target, the pro-Iran sectarian and the pro-U.S. so-called “Awakening” tribal militias have revived their 2007 alliance.

The Washington Post on this February 9 reported that the “Shiite militias” have begun “to remobilize,” including The Badr Organization, Kataib Hezbollah and the Mahdi Army; it quoted a commander of one such militia, namely Asaib Ahl al-Haq, as admitting to “targeted” extrajudicial “killings.”

This unholy alliance is the ideal recipe for fueling the sectarian divide and inviting a sectarian retaliation in the name of fighting al-Qaeda; the likely bloody prospects vindicate Cordesman and Khazai’s conclusion that Iraq is now “a nation in crisis bordering on civil war.”

Al - Qaeda is real and a terrorist threat, but like the sectarian U.S.-installed government in Baghdad , it was a new comer brought into Iraq by or because of the invading U.S. troops and most likely it would last as long as its sectarian antithesis lives on in Baghdad ’s so-called “Green Zone.”

“Al-Maliki has more than once termed the various fights and stand-offs” in Iraq “as a fight against “al Qaeda”, but it’s not that simple,” Michael Holmes wrote in CNN on last January 15. The “Sunni sense of being under the heel of a sectarian government ... has nothing to do with al Qaeda and won’t evaporate once” it is forced out of Iraq , Holmes concluded.

A week earlier, analyst Charles Lister, writing to CNN, concluded that “al Qaeda” was being used as a political tool” by al-Maliki, who “has adopted sharply sectarian rhetoric when referring to Sunni elements ... as inherently connected to al Qaeda, with no substantive evidence to back these claims.”

Al-Qaeda not the Only Force

“Al-Qaeda is “not the only force on the ground in Fallujah, where “defected local police

personnel and armed tribesmen opposed to the federal government ... represent the superior force,” Lister added.

The Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) had reported that the “Iraqi [insurgency](#)” is composed of at least a dozen major organizations and perhaps as many as 40 distinct groups with an estimated less than 10% non-Iraqi foreign insurgents. It is noteworthy that all those who are playing the “al-Qaeda threat” card are in consensus on blacking out the role of these movements.

Prominent among them is the Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al-Naqshabandi (JRTN) movement, which announced its establishment after Saddam Hussein’s execution on December 30, 2006. It is the backbone of the Higher Command for Jihad and Liberation (HCJL), which was formed in October the following year as a coalition of more than thirty national “resistance” movements. The National, Pan-Arab and Islamic front (NAIF) is the Higher Command’s political wing. Saddam’s deputy, Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, is the leader of JRTN, HCJL and NAIF as well as the banned Baath party.

“Since 2009, the movement has gained significant strength” because of its “commitment to restrict attacks to “the unbeliever-occupier,” according to Michael Knights, writing to the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) on July1, 2011. “We absolutely forbid killing or fighting any Iraqi in all the agent state apparatus of the army, the police, the awakening, and the administration, except in self-defense situations, and if some agents and spies in these apparatus tried to confront the resistance,” al-Duri stated in 2009, thus extricating his movement from the terrorist atrocities of al-Qaeda, which has drowned the Iraqi people in a bloodbath of daily suicide bombings.

The majority of these organizations and groups are indigenous national anti-U.S. resistance movements. Even the ISIL, which broke out recently with al-Qaeda, is led and manned mostly by Iraqis. Playing al-Qaeda card is a smokescreen to downplay their role as the backbone of the national opposition to the U.S.-installed sectarian proxy government in Baghdad’s green Zone. Their Islamic rhetoric is their common language with their religious people.

Since the end of the U.S. combat mission in the country in December 2011, they resorted to popular peaceful protests across Iraq . Late last December al-Maliki dismantled by force their major camp of protests near Ramadi, the capital of the western province of Anbar . Protesting armed men immediately took over Fallujah and Ramadi.

Since then, more than 45 tribal “military councils” were announced in all the governorates of Iraq . They held a national conference in January, which elected the “General Political Council of the Guerrillas of Iraq.” Coverage of the news and “guerrilla” activities of these councils by Al-Duri’s media outlets is enough indication of the linkage between them and his organizational structure.

No doubt revolution is brewing and boiling in Iraq against the sectarian government in Baghdad , its U.S. and Iranian supporters as well as against its al-Qaeda sectarian antithesis.

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