

Imperial Misadventures

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In April of 1975, the peoples of the world watched, as the final act of US imperial misadventure played itself out on TV screens. It was here at the US headquarter (embassy) in Saigon, South Vietnam, where the limit of US power was on display. The misadventure that took the lives of more than three million innocent people and left three nations in ruins, was an atrocity 'dedicated to the maintenance of an [unjust] imperialist system'. Similar to its objectives in Vietnam, the US objectives in Iraq are the conquest of Iraq's oil resources and the expansion of US imperial dominance. It will fail.

After the illegal invasion of Iraq, the occupying forces set up their headquarters in the centre of the Iraqi capital, inside the Republican Palace or "Saddam Palace" as it is conveniently called in the West. For Iraqis, the Republican Palace represents the symbol of Iraq sovereignty. Iraq sovereignty is the largest C.I.A. station in the world surrounded by thousands of US troops and a five-kilometre radius concrete wall. It is the "Green zone". It is a walled-in city within a city that houses the Occupation forces and their Iraqi quislings in Baghdad. The Iraqi people have lost not only their sovereignty, but also a large piece of their capital. The "Green Zone" is a no-go zone for Iraqis. From the "Green Zone" the US administration supposedly will control the region and its resources.

By installing its army in "Saddam Palace", the US hoped to emulate Saddam's power and bully the Iraqi people into submission, but this idea is farcical. Saddam is an Iraqi national and Iraqis do not see Saddam as an enemy like they see the Americans. According to several UNESCO reports, under Saddam regime Iraqis enjoyed one of the highest rankings in the Developing World in terms of the Human Development Index, which measures nutrition, health care, housing, education, and other human needs. Iraq infrastructure was the best in the Middle East.

Yes, Saddam is a dictator but if you stayed out of politics, you could lead a good life, socially and economically. It should be borne in mind that, US-backed despots rule most of the Middle East, and the US is the major supporter of tyranny around the world. Western progressives, who sit in their offices analyzing media lies and imposing judgments, have no idea what was Iraq like before the US-Britain sponsored genocide, and what is Iraq like today. The successful demonization of the Iraqi people and Saddam in particular, made US wars against Iraq and the destruction of the Iraqi society politically possible.

The level of destruction done to Iraq in the 1991 US War was three times the destruction done in 2003 war. The level of destruction inflicted by US war machine was incomparable in the history of wars. It was a criminal act of aggression. Yet everything was back to normal in few months. Iraqis were able to achieve this despite the 13 years long genocidal sanctions that killed 2 million Iraqis, a third of them children under the age of five. The US-Britain crimes against the Iraqi people dwarf that of the Saddam's regime.

The US invasion and occupation of Iraq accelerated the destruction of Iraq and the Iraqi society. The pretexts for this war of aggression against Iraq were utter lies promoted by dishonest and biased mainstream media. According to the only scientific report published in 2004 in the British medical journal, *The Lancet*, more than 100,000 innocent Iraqis have been killed. The majority of the victims were killed by US bombing of civilian areas. The estimate was very conservative because it doesn't include the high death toll of Fallujah. The city of 300,000 people has been completely destroyed by US weapons of mass destruction without the slightest protest in the West against an unprovoked atrocity. Further, more than half a million Iraqi men, women and children are in prison. All these atrocities, violations of human rights and the destruction of the Iraqi society are now perpetuated by the US administration from its headquarter, the "Green Zone", in Baghdad.

It is here in the "Green Zone" where the largest imperial robbery of Iraq's economy put to work. Paul Bremer, former US Proconsul and head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq was the designer of this experiment of imperial conquest of Iraq's economy. The widespread privatisation of public assets, which included 100% foreign ownership of Iraqi companies and 100% repatriation of profits, places key sectors of the Iraqi economy into the hands of American corporations.

From the "Green Zone" the US-created CPA "have restricted investment and reconstruction efforts almost exclusively to countries which supported the U.S. invasion," wrote Stephen Zunes of the Peace & Justice Studies Program at the University of San Francisco. "American contractors and their employees were given preference in lucrative reconstruction efforts over Iraqi companies and Iraqi nationals. In addition, from power stations to telecommunication, U.S. designs are replacing Iraqi and European systems".

The changes imposed on Iraq economy follows the design of the infamous structural adjustment programs imposed upon poor and indebted nations by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is responsible for many of the worst crimes and injustices on earth. The recent Iraq debt "cancellation" charade is one of the IMF crimes. The IMF-imposed economic regimen will make Iraq "a poor nation like any other, with politicians determined to introduce policies rejected by the vast majority of the population, and all the imperfect compromises that will entail", writes the Canadian journalist Naomi Klein in Harper's magazine. Iraq's economy will be streamlined into the club of disaster economies such as the Philippines, Argentina, Poland and other former Soviet bloc.

After the 28 June 2004 "hand-over of sovereignty" to Iraqis, the "Green Zone" became even much greyer. According to a report by *The Wall Street Journal* on May 13, 2004: "In a series of edicts issued earlier this spring, Mr. Bremer's CPA created new commissions that effectively take away virtually all of the powers once held by several ministries", including Iraq's budget. This is not only illegal; it is also immoral. The so-called Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) does not have the authority to overturn Bremer's laws. The US "embassy" is the new power in Iraq, not the corrupt quislings who form the IIG, and Iraqis know that behind the scene, the US is tightens the grip on Iraq's future.

The change of the CPA name to US "embassy", and the replacement of Paul Bremer by John Negroponte is an indication of what the US intended to do in Iraq. Mr. Negroponte is an experience missionary in the business of imperial power. He was U.S. Ambassador to Honduras from 1981-1985; a period during which the US military aid to Honduras grew from \$5 million to nearly \$100 million, and more than \$200 million in economic aid, making

Honduras the largest aid recipient and C.I.A. headquarter in the region. Honduras was the launching pad from which the Reagan administration runs its violent “war on terror” in Central American. At the time Mr. Negroponte was in Honduras, Honduras was a military dictatorship. Kidnapping, rape, torture and executions of dissidents was rampant. The military top and middle ranks were U.S-trained at the School of the Americas (SOA), the Harvard version of the CIA, based in Fort Benning, Georgia. According to Human Rights Watch, graduates of the SOA are responsible for the worst human rights abuses and torture of dissidents in Latin America. In Iraq, Mr. Negroponte is supervising the same terror campaigns and death squads that terrorised the population of El Salvador during the 1980s.

Like Central America’s victims, the Iraqi victims are selected carefully. According to Azzaman newspaper, a pro-occupation Iraqi daily, “more than 310 Iraqi scientists have been assassinated at the hands of Israeli secret agents, [the Mossad] since the fall of Baghdad”. The campaign is organised by assassination squads aiming at “liquidating Iraqi scientists”. Further, many Iraqi scientists and prominent Iraqi politicians without charges, and many have simply disappeared.

The other US-backed assassination squads are the Badr squads or SCIRI, offshoots of Khomeini Brigade, which killed many prominent Iraqi officials. Further, ‘there are more than 120 imams and preachers from the Muslim Scholars Association were either assassinated or imprisoned’, Harith Al-Dhari, head of the Muslim Scholars Association told Al-Ahram Weekly recently. The aim is to create an atmosphere of civil war in Iraq and provide a pretext to continue the Occupation.

The US model of El Salvador, where thousands of innocent citizens murdered at the hands of assassination squads, is a criminal campaign that is totally immoral and fraud, and will be defeated by the determined Iraqi people.

A recent report by Anthony Cordesman, a long-time national security adviser for the Pentagon and an insider, reveals that, “The US faces too much Iraqi anger and resentment to try to hold on in the face of failure”. To avoid clear defeat in Iraq the US should not “stay the course”, he added. Furthermore, Cordesman writes, the US imperial objectives in Iraq “are impossible and should be abandoned”.

This new imperial form of “spreading democracy” around the world is fraud and will fail. It is only a matter of time before the peoples of the world will watch the last US helicopter hastily evacuating the last US officials from Baghdad, and end the last act of US imperial misadventure. There is no need to repeat the Vietnam’s catastrophe in Iraq.

A strong and dedicated global anti-war movement, if exists, must work in solidarity with the Iraqi Resistance to end the US occupation of Iraq. It is the only solution to end the violence and free the Iraqi people.

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