

Targetting of Iraq enters critical stage

by Hussein al-Nadeem

Events following the death of King Hussein of Jordan, and the unprecedented gathering of international leaders and heads of state at his funeral in Amman on Feb. 8, indicate that the Anglo-American operation targetting Iraq has moved with breathtaking speed into a new and possibly final phase. As developments have shown, this operation has entered a critical stage, from which there may be no return to reason, or to a political and human solution for the Iraqi problem, sparing the Iraqi nation, the Middle East, and the world from a bloody descent into a new war.

This new phase implies that major settlements have to occur in the region, many heads might roll, and new enemies of Iraq will have to be created and recruited, in addition to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, before any real action can be taken in pursuit of the admitted Anglo-American goal of overthrowing the Iraqi regime and installing a puppet government in the country. The latest candidates for the role of enemies of Iraq, have been Turkey and Jordan.

The sequence of events

On Feb. 8, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told the American press that the new King of Jordan supports the U.S. strategy not only to contain Saddam Hussein, but to overthrow his regime. King Abdullah had reportedly told the Arabic daily *Al-Hayat* that the Iraqi people are facing a humanitarian catastrophe, and that the Iraqi regime cannot be rehabilitated “under current conditions.” On Feb. 9, as delegations were leaving Amman, U.S.-British raids against Iraqi anti-aircraft defenses were resumed, this time with more ferocity and intensity. Meanwhile, British Defense Secretary George Robertson was on tour in the Persian Gulf to “deliver a very important message to the leaders in the Gulf” that Britain would intensify operations against Iraq. The Iraqi leadership a few days later warned both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait that if U.S.-U.K. aircraft continued flying from their bases to bomb Iraq, Iraq would be obliged to strike these air bases. This was the first such warning since the Gulf War.

On Feb. 14, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz visited Turkey to discuss with its government the issue of the use of the Turkish base at Incerlik by American and British air forces for attacks against northern Iraq. Iraq wanted Turkey to choose now (before the Turkish elections) between future relations with Iraq and continued collaboration with the United States and Britain. Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, who, only one week earlier, had attacked the U.S.

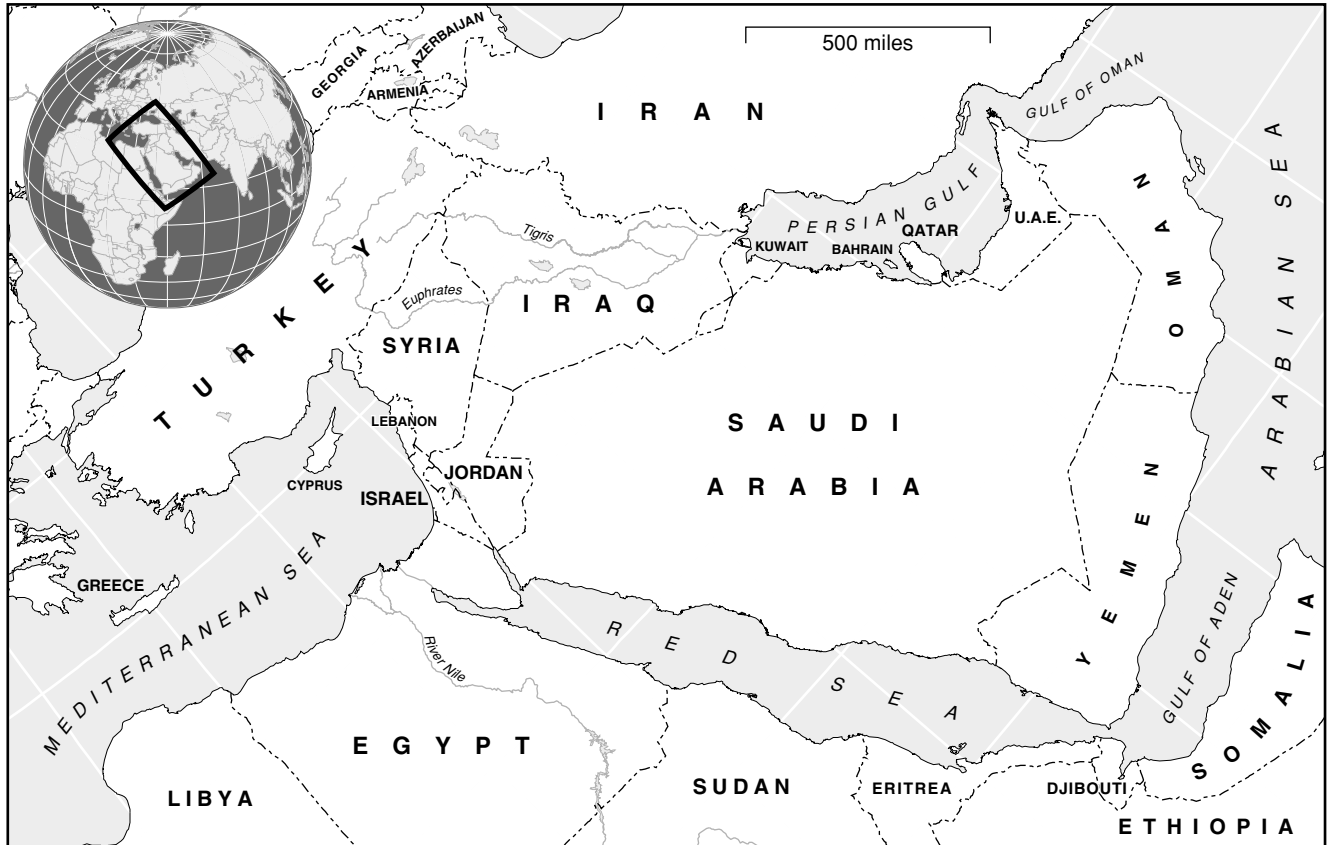
policy of bombing Iraq without having a clear policy for the region, rebutted Aziz in a humiliating way, saying that “the U.S. and British pilots patrolling the no-fly zone were acting in self-defense,” and that the Iraqis were the ones who had provoked the confrontations by violating that zone. It is most probable that the Iraqis were prompted to visit Turkey, by Ankara’s having stated its resentment of the U.S. policy. However, the arrest of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan less than one day after the Aziz visit (which the Turkish government, as well as the U.S. and Britain, knew would take place) gives one clue as to the strange Turkish behavior.

Late on Feb. 15, Iraqi Vice President Taha Yasin Ramadan threatened that Turkey’s bases, in addition to those of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, would also be targets for Iraqi retaliation. On Feb. 17, the same day that 4,000 Turkish troops, assisted by tanks and helicopters, invaded northern Iraq in pursuit of the remnants of the PKK guerrillas, Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Sermet Atacanli told the press: “We have shown in the past that we are ready to meet and respond to any threats that are directed toward us.” According to the Turkish dailies *Hurriyet* and *Sabah*, the invasion force was 10,000 strong. The Iraqi and Turkish statements, along with the Turkish incursion into northern Iraq, have put the two countries on a war footing. It is true that the Turkish Army has carried out much bigger operations in northern Iraq in the past; however, they were carried out in accordance with previous arrangements with Iraq.

In addition, Israeli intervention on the side of Turkey against Iraq has become evident. Reports of Israeli military intelligence assistance on the Turkish-Iraqi border, which Turkey and Israeli had previously denied, were confirmed by Israeli military intelligence analyst Ze’ev Schiff, in the Israeli daily *Haaretz* on Feb. 18. The Israeli-Turkish military alliance has prompted Iran to take a very cautious stance vis-à-vis Anglo-American attempts to overthrow Saddam and carve up the country. Iran continues to have a strong relationship with the Iraqi Kurds and Iraqi Shia leadership, and does not want to allow these two important players to fall into the U.S.-British-supported Turkish-Israeli alliance.

Iran’s concern is that northern Iraq might be used as a destabilizing factor against its own national security, if Turkey concedes to an Anglo-American scenario which would create a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, while giving Turkey portions of northern Iraq in return, and guaranteeing Turkey that the Kurdish issue within its territories would be eliminated. Wiser Turkish leaders would never fall for such stupid schemes, but the “Young Turk” pan-Turkic mentality — and not that of patriot Kemal Ataturk — is prevailing in the Turkish Army leadership which overthrew the government of Refah party leader Necmettin Erbakan in February 1997; Erbakan had wanted to integrate Turkey into the region on the basis of economic cooperation in building the new Silk Road. The overthrow of Erbakan has isolated Turkey, which has already been excluded from the European Union, from its neighbors in the Middle East, leaving it with Israel as its sole friend and ally.

The Mideast region



Jordan fattened up for slaughter

Meanwhile, Jordan has been receiving unusual promises of economic, financial, and military aid from the United States and Britain and their allies in the region, the European Union, Japan, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, Arab investment banks, and even the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. Albright told the press that the United States will increase its foreign aid to Jordan by \$300 million in the next three years, in addition to the \$225 million which is already allocated for Jordan. President Clinton said that the United States will help Jordan strengthen its defense capabilities, and offered further financial help. Arab analysts say that the military assistance from the United States could mean the delivery of the long-awaited F-16s to Jordan. British Prime Minister Tony Blair also said that Britain would assist Jordan with new military and defense equipment, and would discuss with other members of the EU the means of extending debt relief and financial aid to Jordan.

Saudi Arabia immediately sent its Finance Minister, Ibrahim Al-Assaf, to Amman to meet with Jordanian Prime Minister Fayiz Al-Tarawneh, to "discuss ways of economic and financial cooperation," according to the Saudi press. Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia pledged to put "all

Saudi potentials and wealth in the service of Jordan." On Feb. 19, the Jordanian paper *Al Destour* and the Kuwaiti paper *Al Qabas* reported that Saudi Arabia had ordered the Finance Ministry to transfer \$250 million to the Jordanian Central Bank. Kuwait also offered financial help and implied that it would compensate for Iraqi oil, should Iraq stop its supplies to Jordan.

If Jordan were to play a decisive role in the attempt to overthrow the Iraqi regime, its total dependence on almost free Iraqi oil for its energy supplies, and on trade with Iraq, has to be shifted somewhere else. If Iraq were to stop providing this oil, Jordan would have to secure hundreds of millions of dollars within two to three weeks to buy oil on the international market. Previous attempts by the United States to have Saudi Arabia substitute for Iraqi oil failed, because the Saudis insisted on selling the oil to Jordan at market prices. Jordan's unpayable debt stands at \$6.8 billion, and annual debt service amounts to 91% of its GDP. Other financial and economic aid has to be provided to prevent public disturbances and uprisings. The price of food and public services has increased since the IMF imposed its policy on Jordan in 1996, triggering violent riots. Even the water supply has become scarce, and Jordan might be forced to import water. The drought this year

has prompted international aid organizations to send groups to evaluate the food situation, and to decide what amount of direct food aid should be given to Jordan immediately.

The IMF was in a hurry to finalize a new three-year agreement with Jordan in order to extend \$150 million in urgently needed aid. The IMF pledged to open a special fund which Jordan could draw on in times of emergency. The price, however, as the IMF's Deputy Managing Director Stanley Fischer insisted time and again, was that Jordan "privatize, privatize, privatize." The implementation of the first IMF agreement in 1996 provoked bloody riots, at a time when the IMF conditions were not totally followed. Now, full implementation of the IMF program might kill the rest of the economy, which has no social safety net. Jordan, which will become totally dependent on foreign aid, might be supported to survive this year or one more year, but thereafter, it will have almost no economy. By adhering to this strategy, Jordan is mortgaging its future to institutions that have ruined Russia, eastern Europe, Africa, large parts of Asia, and South America.

In addition to this massive mobilization of "financial aid," military and intelligence assistance will have to be provided to prevent intervention from Israel and possibly Syria, and to crush any pro-Iraqi moves from within Jordan itself. British intelligence and security advisers had reportedly gone to Jordan to assist Jordanian security services even before King Hussein died. Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Henry H. Shelton was scheduled to visit Amman on Feb. 19 for a high-level meeting with the Jordanian leadership, on the first stop of a regional tour which was to also take him to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman. Shelton was preceded by Gen. Anthony Zinni, head of U.S. Central Command regional forces, who visited Amman a few days earlier and met with King Abdullah, who is a military commander himself. He was followed by Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.), a member of the House International Relations Committee who met with the Jordanian Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Kaabneh to review developments in the region, and pledged to continue the support for Jordan's economy and security.

The Iraqi leadership, which has been put in an increasingly desperate situation, is expecting a major military show-down within three to four weeks. More than 1 million Iraqi civilians have been armed and trained in the past three months in preparation for an invasion or a civil war. The illusion of overthrowing Saddam Hussein in a quick fix has long been pushed in Washington. In reality, any of the existing scenarios will result in a bloodbath in Iraq, and possibly in neighboring countries; Israel's madman Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is facing political demise in the Israeli elections, would seize the first opportunity to stage a new atrocity in line with an Armageddon doomsday scenario.

Meanwhile, Russia will not let the region be divided in a new Sykes-Picot scheme which excludes Russia, and throws the region into a new round of Great Game geopolitics.

British deploy 'new NATO' in Kosova

by Umberto Pascali

On Feb. 3, the London *Times* predicted what was going to happen in Kosova, in its lead editorial on "Gladstone's Shade," inciting Prime Minister Tony Blair to walk in his footsteps. William E. Gladstone, British Prime Minister and cabinet minister in the post-Palmerston Victorian period at the end of last century—the British Empire's "golden period"—was known as both an inflexible champion of international free trade, and the advocate of British penetration in the Balkans under the cover of helping the "freedom fighters" of the time.

The *Times* blares loud the new imperial trumpet: "NATO is planning to deploy ground forces within a sovereign state, turning part of it into a NATO protectorate. . . . [If a deal is signed between Kosovars and Serbs] NATO ground forces are to police it . . . British ministers have taken the lead, and British soldiers are likely to be the largest component of a peacekeeping force, under British commanders. Gladstone's shade walks the Balkans. . . . [The Blair government] is right to have taken this lead. But Tony Blair needs urgently to explain why it is right for Britain. . . . The people of this country understand well that a trading nation with global interests must be prepared to deploy its forces where international stability is threatened."

Entente Cordiale at Rambouillet

In fact, the Kosovar-Serb "peace talks" that began on Feb. 6 in the former hunting lodge of the French royals, the chateau of Rambouillet, under the joint chairmanship of the foreign ministers of Britain and France, cannot be understood but from the imperial vantage point proposed by the *Times*.

What has been officially discussed at Rambouillet under the direction of French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine and British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, with the junior partnership of the United States in the person of chief mediator U.S. Ambassador Christopher Hill, has little to do with Kosova as such. Kosova, like Bosnia before it, is only a pawn, a cynical pretext for the destructive game triggered by the collapsing financial oligarchy that controls Britain and Wall Street to preserve their bankrupt financial system.

The whole Kosova operation, with all its horrors, destruction, and death, has been, under British manipulation, a way to create unprecedented provocations against those nations and forces that do not fit the mold of globalization, and will not accept being sacrificed to keep alive for a few hours more