
Interview: Aziz Alkazaz

The Pre-Emptive War Against Iraq Is an Evil Example

Aziz Alkazaz was born in Iraq and lives in Germany. He is an economist and a leading expert on Iraq, working with the Deutsches Orient-Institut (German Institute for Middle East Studies) in Hamburg. He was interviewed on June 29, by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach.

EIR: Although the date for the “transfer of sovereignty” from the Coalition Provisional Authority was slated for June 30, it took place very discreetly two days early. What is your view of the situation now?



Aziz Alkazaz

Alkazaz: I think sovereignty is not something that is given or taken; it remains always with the people. Here, it is not a question of transfer of sovereignty—that’s a matter of terminology—but of power transfer; that is, decision-making authority. And in this phase, one can’t yet speak of transfer of power. What they have done is to place certain powers and Iraqi administration units under the interim government. However, if the foreign troops remain in the country, and if these foreign troops can even intervene, without the veto right of the interim government, then one cannot speak of a real transfer of power; that is certainly limited.

You know about the discussion between the interim government and the Bush Administration regarding the command over the troops, veto rights, etc. And this has not been clearly solved regarding the competences, the real decision-making power; although all reasonable people are telling the United States now, please do not intervene any longer as you did in Fallujah, Kerbala, or Najaf without prior agreement of the government. Whether or not they stick to this, how the political differences will be settled; that is, at the moment, unclear.

One thing can be said, and here I speak for the majority of the Iraqi people—with the exception of a very tiny minority, which will say yes and Amen to everything—for the majority of the Iraqis themselves, even things like free elections and democratic relations—right or wrong, manipulated or not, hindered or not—the whole discussion about free elections and other things, these are not in the forefront of interest, as is the restoration of independence, the real transfer of power and the independence of the country. Most Iraqis are for this.

And here they also say clearly, a change of flag is unimportant; that is, under which flag the troops should be, whether American or NATO or a UN flag, as multinational troops under American command; this is, for the Iraqis, actually unimportant. For them, it is the things on the ground that are relevant.

The United States must really show the Iraqis, that they have the firm intention to end the military occupation, to give up their military presence, and to build a completely different basis for a friendship, and an equal partnership. But that they want to continue this direct military presence without interruption, after the well-known war under its well-known boundary conditions; this I consider counterproductive.

EIR: You mean the occupation?

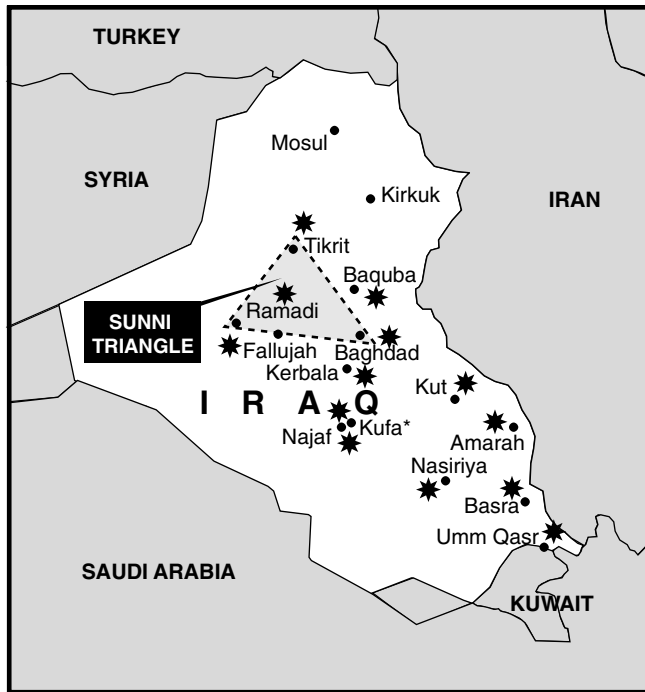
Alkazaz: The occupation is the decisive factor for all considerations. Tragically, the behavior especially of the Bush Administration in Iraq—independent of the ceremonial things—but the actual behavior was the behavior of an occupying power. And this discredited people who, from the beginning, already abroad, had worked together with them. . . .

Thereby, the people who worked with the U.S. from the beginning and earlier abroad, have been discredited and could not build up a popular base in Iraq. If the occupying powers had given them some maneuvering room, more authority, more power, more trust, more effectiveness; and if they had not *played* at showing their “national-patriotic behavior,” but, instead, really had been able to show it, then that would have been a legitimation. But it did not come to that.

In the population, there are grave doubts whether or not the situation will be really different. This is generally doubted, so long as the real power of law remains in their [the occupiers’] hands. Because the only power factor in Iraq that has any say, on the ground, is military power. The militias play a role, political factors play a role, but the actual power lies in their hands.

EIR: What are the most pressing problems now, in your view? What should the interim government do regarding the continuing resistance? Interim Prime Minister Allawi has already spoken of martial law.

Alkazaz: Declaring a state of emergency and martial law, with the reintroduction of the death penalty and executions, would be the greatest stupidity. Then the moral basis for the



The national resistance against the Iraq occupation, as it spread “suddenly” in early April of this year. The “transfer of authorities, not sovereignty,” says Dr. Alkaziz, will have little effect on the causes of this resistance; it will continue as long as U.S. and other foreign occupying forces remain.

American undertaking in Iraq would be completely destroyed. It is already largely ruined, since the whole edifice of alleged reasons for going to war has collapsed, whether it be weapons of mass destruction or the alleged links to al-Qaeda or something else. And, last of all, the prisoner abuse scandals have shattered the moral basis. No one in Iraq, no one in the entire Middle East, no one in the Islamic world and perhaps even beyond, believes, after these events, in a moral aspect of the undertaking. It has been irrevocably destroyed; such things remain indelibly burned into the memory of the people.

When one is dealing with people who are deeply anchored in culture, one cannot commit such errors, which then can hardly be corrected. The Americans must win the hearts of the Iraqis and the Arabs in the region. It doesn't work with these practices, they are unacceptable; and they know that, actually. I don't know what devil got into them, such that they followed precisely the opposite course, with humiliations, with a lack of consideration of the popular mood, with the rapid, nervous shooting left and right as soon as a danger was feared. Now the process of restoring trust has become much more difficult, if they do not manage in the short term to create a new basis for trust. Here, a clear, unambiguous shift in policy is required. One must signal to the people, there is a reversal, it is not going to continue as it was before.

Many Iraqis ask themselves: What's the difference? Bremer goes and Negroponte comes, as the new ambassador,

and the occupying troops stay in the country. There is resistance, and will be, as long as the policy has not changed its objectives. The U.S. has to pursue other objectives, if it really wants to fulfill its mission; that is, “freedom, democracy, and the market.” This is a sort of religion which is important for the Americans and some people in the world. Even for the Arabs, it could be very important, but it must not be directed against Islam, and the culture there. Islam and the culture linked to it cannot be voted out through elections, artificially stuck into a corner. They have to be included into politics.

I find a missionary spirit good; freedom, democracy, the market, are all wonderful; but one must not negate the given culture and the roots of the region. In particular, the Americans, Europeans, and others—whether they are scientific know-it-alls, or unscientific know-it-alls—they should . . . cut out interpreting Islam and saying this cannot be allowed in the Constitution, and that cannot be allowed. One should now say, with consistency and rigor: We will not interfere in religion, and your interpretation of religion. We respect your desire for independence, and a true partnership on the basis of equality.

None of the other aims of the Americans in the Middle East can be achieved without building this trust; since, as a second step after Iraq, they want to democratize the whole Middle East. But, at the same time, they support Sharon, and the one excludes the other. If one gives Sharon's policy maneuvering room, and, so to speak, forces the Palestinians to accept Israel's peace conditions, one cannot democratize the Middle East. These are two different objectives, which contradict each other. Here arises the question of credibility.

EIR: As you know, Lyndon LaRouche has presented a new proposal for peace. According to the LaRouche Doctrine, such a solution must mean a completely new strategic-political approach by the United States for Southwest Asia, such that countries like Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Egypt should play an important role. LaRouche considers a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a necessary part of this solution. LaRouche also stresses the need for a regional economic development perspective on the basis of infrastructure development. What do you think of this?

Alkazaz: The LaRouche Doctrine contains very positive approaches, and I particularly like the profundity of his strategic thinking, the long-term thinking, the independence from short-term interests, and above all, the fundamental orientation that one can develop the huge potential of the region with modern technologies, which we are so excellently blessed with.

Take Iraq, in fact, as an example: For decades it has been prevented, through its own political fault as well as through outside factors, from realizing its gigantic development potential. I am thinking not only of the biggest oil reserves in the world, in Iraq. I'm thinking of the fertile land, of the available fresh water, of the population. In Iraq, there are many qualified employees and executives, as well as develop-

ment-oriented leaders of enterprises and administration. This asset was destroyed by the power struggles inside the country. If one highlights the fundamental attitude of strategic thinking, as LaRouche does, and one demands that people for once look beyond their plate, to consider the whole region as such, then one understands the enormous opportunities which world technologies offer, and that we do live in a “global village.”

But in contrast, current policy suddenly is talking of Sunnis and Shi’ites, and of Kurds and Arabs, and conjures up dangers of civil war and partition. This policy contradicts the historical tendencies in the world, which want to develop markets, active markets; that is, precisely in the direction that LaRouche and many other reasonable people think. Whoever tries to force the Iraqis into a situation of “building a nation,” as in the 19th Century, along the model of bringing together apparently rival groups of people; whoever does this, forces the people to fight, like the Spaniards against Napoleon and his vassals. Excuse me for this historical example.

EIR: How do you see nation-building in the 19th Century as relevant to Iraq today?

Alkazaz: . . . For the U.S., a nation is a state, no matter how small it may be. There are borders, parliaments, governments, elections, flags, and national anthems. But Arabs do not understand the concept of nation in this way. For them, there is an “Arab nation”; the Arabs have grown together in the course of six to eight centuries. The national borders, which the colonial powers drew in World War I, have not been accepted and internalized by the population.

Here, a Western understanding of the building and coming into being of a nation, which stems from the 19th Century, comes to fruition. But, instead of this, one should speak of the “Umma.” The Umma is a nation beyond borders, in the direction of Jordan and Syria, the Gulf region, which through tribal affiliation, has always remained bound together. The new Iraqi President, Ghazi al-Yawer, for example, belongs to the largest tribe, that of the Shammar, which exists everywhere, in Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and earlier also in Saudi Arabia.

And now, from a certain political corner, comes the demand that, since the Arabs and the Sunnis always had power in their hands, they should now be put back. But the Shi’ites, who constitute the majority, are also mostly Arabs. With this, I merely want to say, let people think the way their history has written it in their blood. Let them build their own nations. Take up a constructive dialogue with them.

We need a shift that makes clear that American policy wants to support Iraq to become independent and to treat it as a partner with equal rights. Naturally, Iraqi society is a modern society with internal conflicts, and the conflicts must be democratically solved. But one can only help them, one can only provide support, one must not impose on them any model. That is not democratization.

EIR: At the recent NATO summit in Istanbul, it was decided

that NATO should support the training of the Iraqi army and police. Is this necessary, when one considers that Iraq actually has an army and police forces?

Alkazaz: I consider this NATO meeting rather as a result of internal discussions on the present and future of NATO. The inner Atlantic discussion plays perhaps a greater role here than the future of Iraq.

Naturally the pressure of the Americans to bring NATO into play at all costs, was very big. After the collapse of their “traditional” enemy—the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact—NATO needed a new *raison d’être*, a reason for its existence. And if NATO wants to contribute to solving problems of a political, economic, and social nature in the world—the concept of security has certainly been enormously expanded—then that is its legitimate right. However, I and many others doubt that a military organization, whose people are military, who think in security categories, can contribute to solving problems. There [in Iraq] it is a question of political problems, economic problems, problems of sharing the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris among Iraq, Turkey, Syria; or problems of agrarian reform in Iraq—should it be reversed or should it be further developed; or, ethnic and religious conflicts, old and newly emerged. What should NATO contribute there? That is certainly not its job.

The problem in Iraq is a political problem and must be solved politically, not militarily. One needs no military help in Iraq. The Americans could chop Iraq up into pieces and raze it to the ground—that is not the issue. They do not lack power. But it is a political problem which has to be solved politically. Neither the expansion of their military presence nor the inclusion of contingents from other countries contributes anything to this. Under certain circumstances, it might help President Bush in domestic politics, in his election campaign, if he can say to his voting base: We’re not alone, the alliance is still intact, there are many countries who support us, and reduce our military and financial burden.

For internal U.S. politics, that may have meaning, but not for Iraq, not for the region, nor for the rest of the world. It is a mistake for the U.S. to want to train Iraqi police and, at the same time, fire the professional police who were there. These police enjoy the trust of the population and not all of them are criminals with blood on their hands. If there have been criminal elements, they can be excluded. But one cannot exclude an entire apparatus throughout an entire country. The same goes for the army. The country and the people have always identified with the army. There was a basis of trust, which emerged from their contact with people, and represented a kind of political capital. The army has never betrayed the people, neither under the monarchy nor under the republic. Why did they simply disband this capital? I don’t know who conceived this policy, really. Where are the think-tanks, where are the thousand research institutes—where are they?

EIR: These think-tanks are part of the problem, because they have a geopolitical orientation. They’re not concerned with

support and help for a country, but rather, how one country can be played against the other, in order to keep the entire region under control.

Alkazaz: The Bush Administration's Iraq strategy consists of several factors: The first involves oil policy, and the second, the reorganization of the state and the political system. Democratization of the Iraqi political structure is necessary, but how? Do they want to introduce it only to manipulate the Iraqi leadership? If so, this is a perversion of this instrument. Yet one can introduce a real democracy, with all parts of the population participating and no one excluded. Reasonable laws, a multi-party system and so on, help, but they have to come out of the lap of the society.

Even if only one party, or a coalition, whatever, were to come into being, it could perhaps rule the country more democratically than if one group were played against the other, or if different leaderships and different heads were played against each other. That only destroys, and nothing is achieved thereby; it only perverts the democratic model which one wants to export.

EIR: What are the various historical factors, and those related to Iraqi national identity, which have bearing on the future development of Iraq?

Alkazaz: I would suggest that the U.S. work first for reconciliation, and follow the experience of South Africa—the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under Mandela. The model essentially functioned well. Every country has its boundary conditions. Naturally, some racists had committed terrible crimes and should be punished for them, but not everyone was made an enemy, it was not that, in the process, deep graves were dug deeper; rather it was matter of reconciliation and truth, and everything was put on the table.

Everything should be put on the table in Iraq now, so that an understanding may be possible on the basis of the Iraqi identity. One has to work out or elaborate a viable basis which can then sustain democratic conduct. But one should not by any means use the current situation, only to represent one's own interests. That would be neither a durable solution, nor a productive one, nor anything else. And here the question for me is: Where are the American think-tanks? Where are these institutions? What have they offered as ideas?

EIR: In some of these think-tanks, there is already talk of partitioning Iraq into three small entities.

Alkazaz: What for, then? What would be gained? That is a stillborn child. Because it would only be destructive, and we have devastating destruction in Iraq.

My proposal therefore is: No more destruction. There must be a shift in the direction of construction, including in oil policy. Even crazy Saddam—call him a dictator or criminal—shortly before the war, in a television interview with a former British minister which was broadcast by BBC, offered negotiations and cooperation regarding the control of oil.

But what did they do instead? They want to control Iraqi oil, in order to manipulate the world market oil price for the economy, for Europe, for Russia, and even, under certain circumstances, to use it as an instrument of pressure against a possibly emerging future counterpole to the superpower. But doing this would provoke exactly the opposite—in the region and worldwide. And one cannot control the world market that way. Believe me, I know what I am talking about. This is my specialist field.

I think, this is more or less an obsolete policy. It's the politics of the 19th Century, the politics of the 1920s, and the politics of globalization. They are all part of it.

And here I share LaRouche's view: Open your eyes, please, to the future, to the great tendencies in world history. As far as the distant future is concerned, the constellation has fundamentally changed.

There is a growing resistance internationally to such a policy of preventive wars, because it is an evil example for state powers as a whole. Every large state can make a claim to this, and then declare it sees a future threat in this or that state, and therefore, it will attack pre-emptively. This awakens certain spirits, and it cannot be limited to one power. The same goes for the disregard of international law with this "pre-emptive" war; and at the same time, it goes for the attempt to marginalize or manipulate the United Nations Security Council. And it calls up rival powers through the whole world.

Let us take the coalitions that were formed. One can see how fast they crumble. My God, what did the strategists think? To declare the Islamic region, Islam, as the enemy? I am opposed to fundamentalism, I am totally opposed to criminals like terrorists (where various factors are at play, including secret services, one can barely make head nor tail of it)—but that has nothing to do with the fact that an entire Islamic region is experiencing a strengthening of its consciousness of its own culture.

These countries have, with time, distanced themselves from the West, because they had imported so many experiments from the West, and had tried their luck, but they all failed: socialism of the Soviet brand, before that, liberalism, capitalism; now neo-conservatism, or whatever they are all called. . . . But they did not reach their independence and did not reach their goal to become equal with the West. Then, a disappointed counter-movement set in, in the population. And we now have to see how, historically, we deal with this phenomenon.

EIR: Are you optimistic that the situation, after a real shift in U.S. policy, and with the help of neighboring countries, can be stabilized? How will the resistance develop?

Alkazaz: I think in Iraq, the key for solving problems lies for the most part in the hands of the Iraqis. . . . They will seal a "*mithaq*," a union of trust between Shi'ites and Sunnis and Kurds, in that they will pledge never to fight against one another, and to rebuild Iraq together. A civil war must

be avoided by all means. The Iraqis must independently, without foreign intervention, agree on what role religion should play.

Thus they will relieve the Americans. The Americans, with their intervention, have rekindled some ancient problems in Iraq which had been long forgotten. This refers to the Shi'ite/Sunni problem, as well as the ethnicity of the Kurds; but also the significance of tribes and their disarming. When one once gives them power, one cannot simply take it away from them again. The Americans find themselves confronted with thousand-year-old problems which they do not know, which, however, they have re-ignited. And they do not know how they should get out of this quicksand.

Let the Iraqis find the solution in themselves, and they will implement this solution. One should not let oneself get confused by terms like secularism and fundamentalism. That leads only to confusion there. Without any know-it-all attitude, let the Muslims themselves decide what to do. This will not re-ignite new terrorism, but to the contrary, it will uproot terrorism.

And as a further factor, one must seek truth selflessly; really, the truth—this means, no more tricks of the intelligence agencies, no more talking with a forked tongue. One should state clearly and openly and sincerely, what one wants. And if one makes a reversal in policy, one has to first prove that it really will be implemented. It is a question of the search for truth, and truth cannot be changed with missiles or kaloshnikovs or suicide bombers.

The Iraqi people face their greatest challenge. They must propose a solution themselves—not in order to serve the occupying powers, so that the occupiers then mercifully allow it. They have to simply implement them and without asking permission of anyone. They must unite around a few basic principles, which are just and necessary: for example, voting on their interests with each other. This is not identical to American democratic experience—those are formulas—but the Iraqis have to choose themselves, what mechanisms they want for agreements. The Iraqis must seal this union between Shi'ites and Sunnis. They must swear with a sacred oath that all the riches of Iraq belong to all the people, as LaRouche would say. Petroleum and other riches do not belong to any group of the population, Shi'ites or Sunnis or the Kurds in the North.

This oil wealth or other natural resources serve to finance modernization and development of infrastructure, material and human infrastructure. Here, the “American market” cannot come in and demand privatization of firms, or airports or ports. Private firms do not yet invest in these sectors. Thank God that Iraq has its oil revenues. With them, first the infrastructure should be modernized; so much has been destroyed in the last wars. One cannot yet depend on private investments, it would be like lying to oneself.

The Iraqis must say to one another: All groups in the population are equal before Allah and before the law. All have

the same and equal right to existence, the same duties and so on. They must swear to this. And they must also swear not to serve foreign interests instead of national interests. Then there is a foundation, and then one can freely and openly cooperate, and win over the Americans and others as partners.

This is the reasonable solution. Naturally, here we are talking of single concepts that have to be worked out in detail. Each theme would require the work of a seminar.

EIR: There are some very promising developments in the United States, too. For example, the Supreme Court has just declared that the administration does not stand above the law, particularly in questions of war and peace, or in an emergency situation.

Alkazaz: It's high time. The U.S. has lost its image and its face in the whole world. The motherland of democracy, the highest representative of western democracy, allows itself an Abu Ghraib, can you imagine that? This is not one lost battle, but a defeat in an entire war. That goes against its own morality, against its own system. It is enough to make one cry.

EIR: It also does not represent the original tradition of the American Revolution. In the United States, too, a truth-seeking process is needed.

Alkazaz: One aspect I really want to emphasize. If Americans and Iraqis want to make peace with each other, then what is required is this: Peace is won through convincing, through winning hearts, through entering into dialogue with the way people think, their culture and their self-conceptions. Not through power plays, not through bombs, not through demonstrations of power, not through war; that all produces only destruction. And the self-conception of America is certainly not counterproductive. It embodies the highest values. There is, in the Iraqi people and in all the people of the Middle East, no greater pride than to have studied in an American university.

I was in the home of our former Prime Minister Muhammad Fadhil al-Jamali, who was prime minister during the monarchy in Iraq. In the 1940s and 1950s, he was America's representative in the Middle East. In the eyes of many people in the Middle East, he was an agent of America, so to speak. But he was one of six who drafted the UN Charter. And he had internalized these American values so much, and fought for them in the Middle East. He told me, when I visited him in his home in Tunis: “I was disappointed in the first Gulf War in 1991, with how the Americans dealt with my people. I wrote a letter to George Bush, the father [saying]: ‘I have given my life for you. At the time of the overthrow of the monarchy, I was sentenced to death. But what are you doing now with my legacy?’ ”

And this understanding is alive now, as then, in Iraq. The most recent developments are not representative [of America] for people.