

Only a New Combination in Washington Can Stop a Deadly Partition of Iraq

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

If you think that the Bush Administration has adopted a “new” strategy for Iraq, as hinted over the past days by the President and members of his Administration, you’d best think again. What grabbed headlines last week, as the pathetic George W. Bush stuttered about “changing tactics” and “adapting” to new realities, was nothing but a last-ditch public relations job launched by a desperate White House, in hopes of hanging on to power in upcoming mid-term elections. The illusion they sought to spread was that the Bush Administration, finally waking up to realities in Iraq, would wisely alter its course, and adopt new approaches to stabilize Iraq, bring the remaining U.S. troops safely home, and so on and so forth. All to the glory of the Grand Old Party on Nov. 7.

True, several top military brass made statements urging a shift in policy, the most dramatic being that of Gen. Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of Staff of the British Army, who said his forces should prepare to withdraw from Iraq (see *EIR*, Oct. 27). There followed a spate of remarks, including those made at a joint press conference in Baghdad on Oct. 24, by U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and Gen. George Casey, to the effect that the U.S.A. (and Great Britain) were serving the

battered Iraqi government of Nouri al-Maliki notice, that he must prepare for coalition forces’ withdrawal, within the next 12-18 months.

Such interventions were merely statements of fact: that the situation in Iraq is hopelessly lost, militarily. But as far as a change in *policy* or military *strategy* is concerned, there was none to be seen, and for a simple reason: the madmen currently occupying the White House and Pentagon *have no policy*, other than trying to hang on to power.

The only vague references to an alternative approach, came in much-publicized “leaks” of what the Iraq Study Group (ISG), under James Baker III, might present in January. The items mentioned were: the U.S. should talk to Syria and Iran; and Iraq might be better off partitioned, or, in polite parlance, as a “federation” of autonomous states.

Although it would indeed represent a 180-degree turn for the Bush-Cheney White House to talk to Syria and Iran, currently high on their list of targets for regime change, that in itself would be virtually meaningless within the context of the current policy. It would make sense to open a dialogue with Iran and Syria only within the context of an approach towards establishing a regional security arrangement, as specified back in April 2004, by Lyndon LaRouche in his “LaRouche Doctrine for Southwest Asia.” There, he laid out the need for all Iraq’s neighbors, anchored on four keystone states—Iran, Syria, Turkey, and Egypt (as leader of the Arab world)—to be brought into a regional security agreement, with Iraq, based not only on military, security, and intelligence cooperation, but emphatically on cooperation for regional economic development. Such an agreement, explicitly endorsed by the United States, would make it possible for a phased withdrawal of foreign troops to take place.

Partition: The Most Dangerous Option

The reference to partition, on the other hand, is a live option, and the most dangerous of all. What the ISG has on its drawing boards will remain a closely guarded secret until



DoD photo/Lt. Parsons

Partition schemes for Iraq aim at splitting off the oil-processing areas from the central region around Baghdad. Shown here, an aerial view of an Iraqi oil refinery, about four miles west of the Kuwaiti border.



NATO photo

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned against a breakup of Iraq, at a recent conference in St. Petersburg; many diplomats have cautioned against the chaos a partition would unleash.

some clamorous declarations are presented in January, to be sure. That notwithstanding, it is no secret that members of that body, as well as other policy-shapers and policy-makers, are toying with the idea of partitioning Iraq.

British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett let the cat out of the bag in remarks to the BBC broadcast on Oct. 23. Asked what she thought about the possibility that Iraq might be fragmented, she said: “Everyone has been very keen to keep everyone together, but in the longer term . . . it is not for us to say ‘you will do this or you will do that.’” When further pressed to specify whether or not she thought a breakup of the country would be catastrophic, she said: “If that is what they want and they feel it is workable, that is another matter.” Asked what she thought about a decision on the part of the Iraqis, to go for partition instead of a unified state, she offered this sophistic remark: “That is very much a matter for the Iraqis. They have had enough of people from outside handing down arbitrary boundaries and arbitrary decisions.”

The most enthusiastic and outspoken public cheerleader for partition has been Peter W. Galbraith, former U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, and currently advisor to the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). He has just issued a book, whose title, *The End of Iraq*, leaves no room for ambiguity regarding his outlook. In the book, Galbraith states categorically that Iraq has become a Humpty Dumpty: “There is no good solution to the mess in Iraq. The country has broken up. The United States cannot put it back together again and cannot stop the civil war.” Disagreeing with those who think a breakup would be destabilizing, Galbraith argues, “Looking at Iraq’s dismal history since Britain cobbled it together from three Ottoman provinces at the end of the first world war, it should be apparent that it is the effort to hold Iraq together that has been detabilizing.” So he favors “a managed amicable divorce,” as a precondition for withdrawal of foreign troops.

Such a divorce would mean that the Arab leaders in Iraq would have to accept “Kurdistan’s right to self-determination.”

For Galbraith, “Kurdistan” is in fact the key to Iraq’s future as a pawn of the occupying forces. Given that the South is already controlled by the Shi’ites, he writes, and the Sunni “heartland” is dominated by anti-American hostile forces, the United States would do best to withdraw to the Kurdish North, which he calls the “friendly Kurdistan.”

As reported in the *Turkish Daily News* on Oct. 21, Galbraith delivered a speech to the Cato Institute in Washington, in which he stated outright: “I suggest that we redeploy to Kurdistan, we have allies there. We’ll be welcomed in Kurdistan.” The reason? “Bush screwed up Iraq,” he explained, “and the Kurds love him for that.”

What Would Happen If . . .

Galbraith’s facile argument for partition is as faulty as it is dangerous. Col. Jürgen Hübschen (ret.), a German military professional with experience as a military attaché at the German Embassy in Iraq in the 1980s, characterized the debate on partition, as having “let the genie out of the bottle,” and went on to lay out in stark terms what partition would mean. A partition, with a Kurdish North, a Sunni center, and a Shi’ite South, would mean that “an independent Iraq would no longer exist.” For such an eventuality, Turkey “has not excluded the deployment of military means, because in Ankara they see the danger that the almost 10 million Turkish Kurds would join the new state.” Iran’s 6 million Kurds “would represent a potential for unrest that should not be underestimated.” In addition, Kurdish control over the oil there would be a trump card.

As for a Shi’ite state in the South, Hübschen writes, this would “most probably mean an extension of Iran’s state boundaries” which neither Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, nor Jordan—all Sunnis—would accept. The presence of half of Iraq’s oil resources in this southern state would lend a Shi’ite entity there great influence over world oil deliveries.

Hübschen states unequivocally that any Sunni state in the central part of the country, bereft of oil resources, would be economically unviable. “Therefore, the Sunnis would never accept such a three-way partition, even with a ‘federal regionalization’ under the maintenance of Iraq as an independent state.” In sum: “The three-way partition of Iraq would be the final balkanization of this country with all the consequences known from the past.”

Similar considerations were voiced by W. Robert Pearson, who was the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, from 2000 to 2003, in a *Los Angeles Times* op-ed on Sept. 24. Pearson reminds readers that over 30,000 people died in the 20-year war that Turkey fought against the Kurdish terrorists, and that, “since the beginning of the Iraq war, Turkey has watched the same insurgency renew a guerrilla campaign.” That campaign, it must be stressed, has been being run from inside

northern Kurdish Iraq, under the watchful eyes of the U.S. occupying forces.

In short, anyone who knows anything about the realities of the situation, would agree with LaRouche, that partition would simply be the trigger for a region-wide war, along ethnic/sectarian lines, a war no one would win—except those bent on destroying the nation-state wherever it exists.

Who Gets the Oil?

A not-insignificant factor in the fight over the future of Iraq, is its vast oil wealth. The estimated 112 billion barrels of oil reserves make Iraq second only to Saudi Arabia, and experts estimate the figure could rise to 200 billion. Add to this, the 110 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves, and Iraq has the potential to earn \$10-15 billion a year from these resources.

The lion's share of the oil is found in the northern and southern parts of the country, "Kurdistan," and what would become a Shi'ite entity under a federated or partitioned Iraq. According to Kurdish estimates, the region has 45 billion bbl, and further reserves of anywhere from 11 billion (according to the International Energy Agency) to 40 billion bbl (according to the Kurds) in Kirkuk, which is not formally a part of the Kurdish region. The region is made up of the provinces of Arbil, Sulaimaniya, and Dohuk.

Thus, the battle which the Kurdish Regional Government is waging to annex Kirkuk, and make it the capital of "Kurdistan." Kirkuk is an ethnically mixed city, with Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen, who may be Shi'ites, Sunnis, or Christians. Under Saddam Hussein, the city was "Arabized," by influxes of Arabs, and Kurds were driven out. Following the 2003 war, this trend was reversed, and masses of Kurds moved to Kirkuk (including those who had never lived there before). This was wholly endorsed by the U.S. and British occupying powers, who gave the returning or newly arrived Kurds voting rights. According to the new Iraqi Constitution, a census and referendum are to be organized by the end of next year, which should determine who will be in control of Kirkuk. This is opposed by the non-Kurdish people in the city, as well as outside: the Sunnis, largely located in the center of the country, look to Kirkuk as a potential oil revenue resource for their federated or independent entity.

The 2005 Constitution feeds the problem, especially regarding control over the natural resources, their exploitation, and destination of revenues. As Dr. Ashti A. Hawrami, the Kurdish Regional Government Minister for Natural Resources, explained in a June 14, 2006 interview, the Constitution states, in Article 111, "Oil and gas are the property of all Iraqi people in all regions and governorates." However, Article 112 states: "The Federal government in cooperation with the producing regions and governorates shall administer the extracted (produced) oil and gas from existing oil and gas fields provided that the proceeds (revenues) are evenly



Carrying the flag for those whose aim is to destroy every nation-state on the planet, is Peter W. Galbraith; the title of his new book, The End of Iraq, tells it all.

distributed in accordance with the demographic distribution around the whole country, and a specific share of the proceeds for a specific period of time shall be allotted to the regions which were unjustly deprived by the previous regime, and were affected by it, to secure a balanced development of the different areas of the country and this shall be regulated by law." Dr. Hawrami interprets this to mean that the Federal government has merely an administrative role, regarding handling of existing fields, but the government's role "does extend to the actual oil and gas extraction process, such as drilling, field operations, day-to-day running and management of oil and gas fields." Furthermore, the Kurdish leader says that since the Kurdish and southern governorates were deprived under the Saddam Hussein regime, they should benefit from extra allocations.

A further clause, Article 115, states that, "Any rights that are not stated under the exclusive powers of the Federal authorities shall come under the authorities of the regions and the governorates, and with regard to all the other jointly shared authorities between the Federal government and the regions and governorates the priority shall go to the laws of the regions and the governorates in the case of conflicts between them." Dr. Hawrami explains that this means the "supremacy" of regional laws over Federal ones. He asserts that, since no specific mention is made of undeveloped, unexplored, or new fields, or their activities or proceeds, then the regions and governorates have control.

Since the 2003 war, the Kurdish government has signed deals with three foreign companies, and in late 2005, new oil reserves were found by a Norwegian firm. Hussein al-Shahristani, Oil Minister of the Federal government, stated that he would not honor such contracts signed in the past by the regional government. The conflict is going to escalate when the Kurdish Regional Government presents an oil bill

to the regional parliament, which is certain to be contested by the Federal government.

When Secretary of State Condi Rice visited the region on Oct. 6, she met with Massoud Barzani, president of the regional government. Standing in front of the U.S. and Kurdish (not Iraqi) flags, Rice called for agreement on the oil issue, while Barzani reasserted Kurdish rights: “like any other *nation*,” he said, Kurdistan “has the right to self-determination.”

Can National Unity Be Saved?

Two processes are feeding into the centrifugal tendencies towards a tripartite division of Iraq: the intensified ethnic/sectarian military conflict, and the political moves by the Parliament towards “federalism.” On Oct. 11, while some political forces boycotted the session, the Parliament voted for dividing the country into autonomous regions.

But this all must be viewed from the higher level: It is the policy of the oligarchical financial circles ultimately behind the war party, to destroy the nation-state. None of the processes now gaining a dynamic of their own, towards the break-up of Iraq, are “sociological” or “organic.” It was the Bush-Cheney Administration’s 2003 war that unleashed them, and it has been the hand of the occupying powers directly since then, which has guided—or rather, written—the Constitution and accompanying legislation, that have provided a possible break-up with its legal cover.

Diplomats from the region have told *EIR* they fear a partition, and the undescrivable chaos that it will unleash in the region. Recently, even Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned against a break-up of the country. Lavrov was asked by a journalist Oct. 24, on the sidelines of a conference in St. Petersburg, whether a breakup of the country was possible amid rampant violence. He said he believed that that could happen in the absence of rapid measures: “If there is no sudden change and if there is no start to efforts toward unity, this situation could become reality.”

There are forces in Iraq who recognize the threatened chaos, and have spoken out against any such idea of partition, by any name. For example, a document issued from Mecca at the end of Ramadan, by a group of Iraqi religious scholars, both Sunni and Shi’ite, stressed the need to “join ranks with a view to the independence of Iraq and its *territorial integrity*” (emphasis added). The measure has the backing of supreme Shi’ite leader Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, militia leader Moqtadar al-Sadr, and others. However, these religious scholars are not the ones calling the shots on the ground.

To pull back Iraq and its people from the abyss called “partition,” a new policy must emerge in Washington, a policy shaped by the LaRouche Doctrine, and dedicated to the defense, preservation and development of perfectly sovereign nation-states, in cooperative agreements for their mutual benefit. That policy can emerge as government policy, only with a new combination in Washington, which the Nov. 7 mid-term U.S. elections must usher in.