

Iraq and liberation

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Disquiet is building in the United States among those who were led by the propaganda of the Bush administration and the American media into supporting the invasion of Iraq. No weapons of mass destruction have been found to prove the assertion that Iraq threatened the US; no evidence of Iraqi links to international terrorism has been produced; and the daily reports of attacks on American troops and the almost daily casualties are undermining the White House claims that the Iraqi people would welcome the US forces. Large numbers of Americans—particularly the American soldiers occupying a hostile country—are beginning to suspect they were lied to and asking what business the US had in Iraq in the first place.

On Monday, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld used his Pentagon press conference to outline how the Bush administration intends to answer the growing doubts. Invoking the coming July 4th commemoration of American independence in 1776, Rumsfeld justified the situation in Iraq by contrasting it with the turmoil during the first years of the American republic—which he categorized as “chaos and confusion,” “rampant inflation and no stable currency,” and “discontent” leading to “uprisings” and “angry mobs.”

“That history is worth remembering as we consider the difficulties that the Afghans and Iraqis face today,” he declared.

“The transition to democracy is never easy. Coalition forces drove Iraq’s terrorist leaders from power, but unlike traditional adversaries that we’ve faced in wars past, who sign a surrender document and hand over their weapons, the remnants of the Ba’ath regime and the Fedayeen death squads faded into the population and have reverted to a terrorist network...

“Those battles will go on for some time. The liberation of Iraq is complete, the regime has been removed from power and will not be permitted to return. But our war with terrorists in Iraq, Afghanistan and across the globe continues. It will not be over any time soon. As Jefferson taught us two centuries ago, the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.”

(<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030630-secdef0321.html>)

In other words, the American people are to be reassured that the stripping away of their rights at home in the name of a “war on terrorism,” two invasions in two years and a growing tally of dead and wounded in Iraq is justified as it will ultimately lead to the establishment of democracy in countries that have long suffered under oppressive regimes. All opposition to the Bush administration’s policy is to be dismissed as the work of isolated terrorists, who will soon be eliminated.

It is debatable which is more offensive: the term terrorist being used to describe Iraqis fighting against an invading military force in their own country, or a representative of the Bush administration invoking Thomas Jefferson and the American Revolution to justify its actions.

The American Revolution was motivated by the greatest democratic ideals of the time against the outmoded feudal political and social relations associated with aristocracy and privilege. Revolutionaries like Jefferson fought for representative government against the British crown, the most powerful empire on earth, in history’s first great anti-colonial struggle.

The war against Iraq was conceived of by a government installed by the Supreme Court against the will of the majority of the American people, and carried out in hopes that US corporations would profit from the plunder of Iraq’s resources. It was a predatory invasion of a poor but oil-rich country that had been rendered virtually defenseless by a preceding war and a decade of economic sanctions. It was a war legitimized with threadbare lies that Iraq possessed weapons that threatened the United States and had connections to the September 11 terror attacks.

The American Revolution produced a democratic republic free from foreign domination. The “liberation” of Iraq consists of 24 million Iraqis living under the guns of foreign soldiers who do not understand their language, culture or religion. It means Iraq being governed by an un-elected American official named Paul Bremer whose primary mission is selling off the country’s industries to various US or US-backed corporations. The “interim” Iraqi government which will be expected to agree to this will not be elected by the Iraqis, but appointed by the US from among whomever it

can recruit as collaborators.

Any opposition will be violently suppressed. Bremer declared this week: "There are people who are out here, particularly remnants of the old regime...still fighting us. We are going to fight them and impose our will on them. We will capture and if necessary kill them until we have imposed law and order on this country... We dominate the scene and we will continue to impose our will on this country."

Confronted with such a reality, resistance against US rule is as politically, legally and morally justified as the resistance against Nazi rule in occupied Europe during World War II. The Iraqis taking up arms against foreign invaders are conducting a legitimate struggle against colonial rule. The fact that the former Iraqi government never formally surrendered power to the US forces simply reflects the basic truth that a significant percentage of the Iraqi population did not then, and does not now, accept the legitimacy of any regime imposed by the force of American arms. Moreover, under existing international law there are no legal grounds for any state in the world to do so.

There are clear indications that a relatively organized resistance struggle has already begun to take shape. According to statistics cited by Daniel Smith of *Foreign Policy in Focus*, US forces were subjected to 131 attacks between June 9 and June 22—including 41 against troop compounds, 26 on sentry or observation posts and 26 on vehicle convoys. On June 23 alone, another 25 attacks took place.

The last nine days have seen dozens more attacks. On Monday, an NBC journalist traveling with US troops was wounded in the city of Fallujah when a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) was fired into their vehicle. US forces in Baghdad were subjected to two ambushes on Tuesday that left at least six American soldiers and one Iraqi interpreter seriously wounded. Unconfirmed reports indicate that four of the soldiers were killed. Another two US soldiers were injured the same day outside Fallujah, when their Humvee plunged in a deep rut that appears to have been deliberately dug in the road.

Like the Nazis, the Bush administration has responded to resistance with repression. Every day in Iraq, people are being killed or wounded by American soldiers or taken from their homes in the dead of night on "suspicion" they are involved in opposition to the US occupation.

On the weekend, US forces launched their third major operation in less than three weeks to locate Iraqi resistance fighters suspected to be operating among the large Sunni Muslim population in the Tigris river valley between Baghdad and Tikrit. Code-named "Sidewinder," the operation began in the early hours of Sunday morning with

27 simultaneous raids around the city of Samarra. Thousands of American troops from the Fourth Infantry Division descended upon small villages and towns purported to be guerrilla hideouts. A US official described the operation as a display of "overwhelming combat power." A total of 61 Iraqis were reportedly detained.

Operation "Sidewinder" follows operation "Desert Scorpion," which was conducted from June 15 to June 30 and saw over 1,300 Iraqis detained for interrogation during raids on houses and businesses across Baghdad and the Tigris valley.

Despite the repression, the attacks on US forces are increasing. Since George Bush declared "major combat" to be over on May 1, American forces have suffered at least 30 combat deaths, 39 non-combat fatalities and several hundred wounded. While these casualty figures are small, that is little comfort to the families of the 146,000 US military personnel in Iraq whom the Bush administration has placed directly in harm's way. A significant proportion of the American population now lives with a constant fear that their husband, wife, son, daughter, parent or friend is going to be killed or maimed in Iraq.

Morale among rank-and-file American soldiers is steadily deteriorating. A military police reservist told the *Washington Post*: "US officials need to get our [expletive] out here. I say that seriously. We have no business here. We will not change the culture they have in Iraq, in Baghdad. Baghdad is so corrupted. All we are here is potential people to be killed and sitting ducks." An Iraqi policemen hired by the US occupation bluntly told the *Post*: "Iraqi people hate the Americans."

The occupation of Iraq is a shameful chapter in American history for which there is only one just remedy: the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all American and foreign military forces.



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