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The Geopolitics of Contemporary Imperialism

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Will the United States be the promoters of democratization in the South in general, the Arab world and Iraq in particular?

Right from the start, the occupation of Iraq formed part of the American plans of military control of planet. The blockade inflicted during thirteen years had prepared the way for the easy invasion of a country that was already put of breath. The supposed presence of weapons of mass destruction was no more than a deliberate lie, which moreover is not even talked about any more. Some time after this article was written, the predictable arrest of Saddam Hussein was announced. With the installation in Baghdad of a government which gathers personalities of all apparent orientations (middle-class, Islamists and even some former Communists – with only the Baathists being excluded), with the capture of Saddam Hussein, the United States now claim to promote in Iraq a democracy which would become a model for the other countries of the area.

The question is whether the project of the United States for whole planet is compatible with the democracy. My answer is in the negative. The only objective of Washington's strategy it to impose a tribute on the whole world, by the military control of planet, in order to continue to take advantage of the capital flows which until now have "spontaneously" covered the US external deficit. The permanence of this flow is now under threat, exposing the vulnerability of the United States economy, which has been incapable maintaining its excessive level of consumption through its own output alone. This project implies: the submission of the entire South to its savage imperialist dictates: the systematic dismantling of all capacity for economic resistance (if necessary by the destruction of industrial, scientific and social infrastructures through war); the installation of regimes that annihilate all democratic perspectives; and of course military subjugation as well.

In Iraq the objective of Washington is nothing other than the brutal plundering of the oil resources of the country. To enable this, it is necessary to dismantle all the industrial and scientific capacities that were relatively developed in this country, which made a candidate for becoming of it an active actor in the regional geopolitical order. Saddam Hussein made himself the enemy to cut down the day when he thought of rather selling Iraq's oil in euros rather than in dollars. Iraq from now on is threatened by an incredible retrogression, obviously incompatible with any prospect of its democratization.

Could one nevertheless imagine that the United States government gives up its criminal and excessive project, for the benefit of a shared management of what I have called the collective imperialism of the triad?

This possibility would not modify the larger issue with regard to the South in general and Iraq in particular. The only alternative to this model of apartheid on a world scale requires the acceptance of the principle of the rebuilding of a multipolar world

system, and, within this framework, the installation of systems of regulation which open spaces for social progress and democracy, which cannot be disassociated from each other. But, to suppose that one engages in this direction, to what extent would the Arab societies in general, and the Iraqi society in particular, move in the direction of democracy by themselves?

Are the Arab countries and Iraq able to start their democratization?

The answer that I have already given to this question is measured (cf Amin and Ali El Kenz, *The Arab world*, pp. 6-12). At present Arab political culture has not moved out of what I have called the “system Mameluk”. Iraq is not exception an. The conditions that Iraq has known better than other countries of the South could feasibly be described as “enlightened despotism” by analogy with 18th century Europe: modernization, secularization and progress of women's rights, industrialization, education, health. The Baath parties in Syria and Iraq, Kemalism in Turkey, Nasserism, and even the mode described as “Communist” in Afghanistan, all belong to this same family.

Could “enlightened despotism” have opened the way for the evolution of democracy?

The examples of South Korea and Taiwan province of China would suggest a positive answer. Let us observe nevertheless that in these two cases the United States supported actively, for geo-strategic reasons, the economic and social development carried by the regimes in place. But elsewhere, Washington and the other powers of the triad fought the same project with energy. This reveals that global capitalism cannot allow the real development of the countries of the South, their modernization, their effective industrialization, their possible democratization, because such development would destroy the advantages of the “centres” of the system, which are imperialist by nature.

Iraq is one of the major victims of this imperialist logic. The tendency of the regime, already bloodthirsty, was worsened by the illusions of Saddam Hussein, who believed that his country could gain the friendship of the United States by working for them and engaging in the war against Iran, which was at one time enemy number one for the American Establishment. Saddam received then, more than promises, actual weapons provided by the United States (in particular chemical) and financial resources provided by the southern allies of Washington.

The Iraqi imbroglio

In spite of success proclaimed by the apparatus of American propaganda (which includes the capture of Saddam Hussein) the United States is embroiled in an occupation which will never be accepted by the Iraqi people. As of the first day of this occupation the response appeared with vigour. The resistance, which involves all the segments of the political and ideological arc of the country, will be probably being reinforced in spite of the increasingly violent colonial repression which has been declared.

The presence of Saddam Hussein had constituted a justification for the deployment of US troops, nourishing the fear of the return of a dictatorship detested by the majority. His arrest did constitute a victory for Bush in his race for re-election. But this was not a victory over the Iraqi political ground: the political imbroglio in Iraq remains in its entirety. The media adopted the practice of giving Iraq the image of a country whose political life would be reduced to the confrontation among its three components (Shia, Sunni and Kurd). The occupying authority itself seems to be convinced of this and believes in its capacity, on this basis, to develop further the internal divisions of the country. It visibly encourages political Islam (among Shias and Sunnis) to provide a counterweight to the still powerful secular currents in the country, as it pushes certain Kurdish leaders towards preparing for secession. No doubt the occupier will be able to record by these means some short-term successes, especially because the dictatorship had already liquidated all the potentially vibrant political organizations in the modern history of Iraq (in particular the Communists).

:Community” may now appear to all and sundry as the only possible means of assertion. The United States, whose own political culture was largely founded on some notion of communitarianism, has been encouraging such tendencies. Everywhere (as in Yugoslavia) Washington has been expressing its preference for supporting regimes based on “ethnocracies”. to the support of modes? Consequently the policy of the occupier has become the major obstacle to the democratisation of Iraq. This policy is now joined with of its ally Israel, which also fears a world strengthened by democratization, that would consequently also respect the democratic rights of the Palestinians.

Undoubtedly, the unity of Iraq was originally imposed upon the Shias and the Kurds, for the benefit not of Sunnis in general, but of a ruling class coming from this group and created by the British to set up the monarchical system rather than one based upon a popular mandate. The bloody drift of the regime of Saddam Hussein especially after its defeat in 1991, was all also responsible for the current state of division and of distress of the Iraqis Nevertheless the major political conflicts which marked the modern history of Iraq were of a completely different nature. The Baathists transformed the communitarian spirit which they presented as a visceral tendency. The democratic and socialist parties along with the Kurds were partners in power during the best moments of this history (when the government fought with the Western powers). The Kurds of Iraq have profited from a statute which they never had in Turkey, a country which is nevertheless, supported unconditionally by the United States and a candidate for entry into the European Union. And this is why those who envisage that the Baathist forces have been dealt with the capture of their “leader” make a serious error. The regime created by the revolution of July 1958 had managed to generate an authentic national popular front. The Iraqi people and their resistance are capable of proving this again today.