

## **The Iraqi syndrome and the options for peace**

**Shakhawan Shorsh**

01 December 2006

Day after day the ethnic and sectarian killings in Iraq are increasing. The security of the divided country is non-existent in some places, the militants' power is growing, and the intra-ethnic security dilemma is alarming throughout the country.

The Coalition forces lead by the Americans are having difficulty taking control over the Sunni triangle. More than 2000 American soldiers have lost their lives, and the number killed is rising day by day. Since April 2003 after toppling the Ba'ath regime, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have been killed. More than 400 thousand Iraqis have fled their homes and many more have left Iraq.

The chaotic Iraqi situation which brings Iraq to the verge of a large-scale, internal ethnic conflict, indicated the obvious failure of the imposed nation-building and reconstruction strategy. This country, which was originally created by force, has suffered from ethnic tensions and conflicts from its first birthday. There has never been a unified nation in Iraq.

The Iraqi political situation and the increasing mistrust between ethnic groups in Iraq credit the primordial thinkers as they argue that state-building in such a country is a waste of time and resources. Suppose that the Americans separated the ethnic groups from each other and established sufficient defenses between the borders, would the ethnic groups fight each other like those we witness today? Iraq's unity is so holy, whatever happens in Iraq, no matter how many hundreds of thousands lose their lives, and how deep is the ethnic division, no one should touch the failed strategy of nation-building, even if a nation does not exist in Iraq. This does not makes any sense. How long will the Americans and other big powers close their eyes to the ethnic division in Iraq, and how many more lives will be necessary to convince them to give up and face up to the reality of ethnic division.

According to official discussions, the Americans and their allies are primarily concerned about how to exit from the Iraqi syndrome and proclaim success of the so-called democratization program. Democracy and freedom are insignificant topics, and no clear, positive indications exist that can make them possible in the near future. Conversely, establishing security at the expense of human rights and democracy is the main goal for the Americans. In this way they dare to ask dictator countries such as Iran and Syria for help. Involving Iran and Syria is probably connected with a bigger deal on some vital subject in the region. Nevertheless, they do the worst thing but will not face up with the reality, wherein work on a durable solution which reflects the aspirations of the national and ethnic groups in Iraq.

What can a dictator or a totalitarian country do for democracy, freedom, equality and human rights concerning the Iraqi people?! Human rights and dignity do not exist in those countries. In addition, Iraqi neighbor countries have their own different ideological and national interests in Iraq and their involvement would probably worsen the political situation. They are already involved in Iraq's ethnic conflict against the wishes of the Americans. Giving these countries more access to Iraq's internal conflict will make them more powerful to pursue their own national interests

inside Iraq. Should it be up to Iran and Syria, they will use their usual iron power to keep people in control in the absence of freedom and democracy.

Conversely, by asking for help from Iran, Syria and Turkey, the Americans are indicating that they will keep the status quo situation in connection with the Kurdish question. This is again a disappointment for the Kurds, as they are judged not to be free by the regional and big powers.

The Americans dwell obviously on a way to secure security and then withdraw gradually from Iraq. This is central for them. They do not work for a long term solution about the underlying negative factors that caused the conflict. Thus, there is no sign for a lasting peace among the different ethnic groups in Iraq.

The brutal violence among the ethnic groups and the obvious division between the Kurdish north, Sunni triangle and Shia south are good reasons for partitioning Iraq. The Americans should work on a partition strategy if they are looking for a long term peace. Three new nations make the Kurdish dream come true; make the Shia free; and, give the Sunnis what they really own. Partitioning needs adequate international peace forces and self-defense forces of the groups. International conventions oppose any intervention by other neighbor countries, should the partitioning strategy become a reality. In addition, the protection of the sovereignty of these new nations will be an international issue.