

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2015/03/12/tragedy-of-iraq-i.html>

Tragedy of Iraq (I)

Anton VESELOV

3/12/2015



Iraq has gone through real hardships in recent years. There were times when the country claimed to be the regional leader but the foreign intervention set it many years back. The events of 2014 put into question the very existence of Iraq as a state. In February 2015 Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani told the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper, «If Iraq wants to stay together it has to pursue a different system of governance».

Actually the country has become divided. It's extremely hard to piece it together again. There are influential forces that go to any length to prevent the unification process. The resurrection of Iraq as a strong, independent state is a nightmare for those who have achieved the main goal: it's a

long time since the issues of supporting Palestine and eliminating the «Zionist entity» (as they used to call Israel) vanished from the Iraqi agenda. Now they throw up their hands and complain about the intrigues of outside enemies. They believe that internal enemies are even more threatening. And they find them. Hatred and greed have become driving motives behind the actions of leading Iraqi political forces. Their miscalculations and intended deeds have moved the country to the brink of disaster – a full-scale civil war. Iraq has lost one third of its territory, including the cities of Mosul (with the population exceeding 2, 5 million till June 2014), Tikrit, Ramadi and other populated areas captured by radical extremists and sundry riffraff acting under the banners of Islamic State. In 2014 over 17 thousand people lost lives as a result of violence – the biggest death toll in the recent eight years.

There were other things that happened in 2014. The Iraqi financial-economic system collapsed. Baghdad started to make official statements about bankruptcy taking place in the country rich in oil and gas. Unemployment has risen to 25% among able-bodied people. The government of Nouri al-Maliki even failed to come up with a draft budget leaving the country without a document of fundamental importance. The rampant corruption in «the new and democratic Iraq» has reached an unprecedented scale. They steal wherever and whatever they can. Iraqi embezzlers don't invent complicated schemes. Contracts with front companies guarantee multi-million benefits with no responsibility to face. There is a plethora of examples. On November 28, 2014 Lebanese special services detained in Beirut Ahmed al-Maliki, the son of Iraqi former Prime Minister and current Vice President of Iraq Nouri al-Maliki. Ahmed was arrested for having more than US \$1.5 billion cash with him. Security sources in Lebanon mentioned that Ahmed had received the money via an Iraqi bank that transferred it to one of the Lebanese banks for him. They also stated that it was not the first time Ahmed received a large sum from an Iraqi bank. According to them, the money was sent to buy property in Lebanon, as well as in some European countries.

At the beginning of 2014, the US saw clearly that the time was ripe for changing the Iraqi government. US State Secretary John Kerry openly called on then Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to resign. The main goal of Washington is to maintain its control over the country. The prospects for losing the access to Iraqi oil made the West take more resolute actions than just weak protests condemning the Islamic State. In August an ad hoc meeting of the European Union was called in Brussels to discuss the measures to counter illegal oil trade practiced by the Islamic State militants. Two United Nations Security Council resolutions related to the issue were adopted in the following six months. Multiple conferences, meetings and consultations were held to discuss the problem.

It's not an easy mission for the West. Iran defends its interests in Iraq. It has enough leverage to challenge the United States. For instance, on September 8, the Iranian Ambassador to Iraq said his country would not support the new Iraqi government if Hadi al-Ameri, the leader of the radical Iranian-backed Badr Organization, did not head the Interior Ministry. Al-Ameri is an extremely odious figure in the eyes of Iraqis. At the beginning of the Iraq-Iran war of 1980-1988 Hadi al-Ameri changed sides and was personally involved in the tortures of Iraqi prisoners of war. He saw military service in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and was promoted to General's rank. During the Nouri al-Maliki's tenure he was appointed the Minister of Transportation. Big «Law Above All!» posters appeared at airport buildings. Only the transport

of one company could be used to get to and from national airports. It became a rule applied to all, except foreign diplomats. The company belonged to the Minister's son. They tell a story that once al-Ameri Jr. was late for a MEA flight from Beirut to Baghdad. The captain was forbidden to land in the Iraqi capital and the plane had to return and pick up the latecomer. An international scandal sparked but Hadi al-Ameri apologized only when MEA suspended all flights to Baghdad in protest.

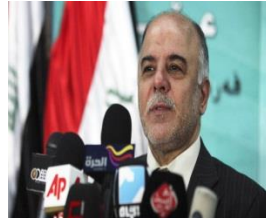


In the spring of 2014 Iranian advisors came to Iraq. Qasem Soleimani, a Brigadier General in the Iranian Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution and the commander of the Quds force - a division of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards primarily responsible for extraterritorial military and clandestine operations - has visited Iran on a number of occasions. Tehran let know the inviolability of Shia shrines in Iraq became its direct responsibility. Amiri makes no secret of his close relationship with Iran — and squarely credits it with frustrating the Islamic State's advances. «If it wasn't for Iran, Baghdad would have fallen,» he said. «Iran supported us very well. They gave us weapons, they gave us ammunition, they gave us their military experience».

The West did not watch the situation idly. Almost daily Baghdad and Erbil received US and European delegations visiting Iraq. As a result of employing a very crafty multi-phased scheme, the Iraqi ruling structures were completely changed without actually changing anything. Formally the changes were significant with only four ministers of previous government remaining in the cabinet and only one of them retaining his position. The decorations were changed accompanied by reshuffling the old pack of cards. The majority of old timers one way or another remained in the ranks of top echelon of power. Only spheres of responsibility and influence were changed. New positions were established (three vice-premiers and three vice-presidents) to make the old guard comfortable. Nouri al-Maliki became Vice President of Iraq to let know soon that he was not satisfied with the position of just another figurehead. According to him, he was ready to head the government if people wanted him to.

The power is divided between Pro-Iranian and pro-Western (some politicians managed to join the both) groups. It's a pity there is no pro-Iraqi representation. The absolute majority of those who came to power in Iraq have spent 20-30 years abroad – they are all united by the feeling of hatred towards the previous regime and everything related to it. In 2003 many of them were transported to Baghdad from London by allied aircraft. Today they are the ones the West relies on. In late December 2014, Iraqi President Fuad Masum waived his passport and nationality given to him by Britain and returned them back to the authorities. The Iraqi constitution stipulates in its article 18 on the «inadmissibility of the multiplicity of sexual Iraqi forces while serving in a position of a sovereign or a senior security abandoning any other nationality that is

regulated by law». The President spared no words of gratitude to the United Kingdom. Nothing has ever been reported about other top officials refusing their British citizenship, for instance: Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, his deputy Ayad Allawi, Ibrahim Jafari, Iraq's Foreign Minister.



The list is not long. The advocates of Western type of democracy had to be mixed with those who have spent no less time in Tehran than the pro-Western opposition in London. They act as fierce supporters of Iran. Hadi al-Ameri is the best known among them. Many believe him to be a rather dividing than consolidating figure. Sunni Muslims offered stiff resistance opposing his appointment, but their opinion is ignored at best, and quite often force is used to quell them.



The Sunni politicians allowed to make it to the top are not popular even among their community. For instance, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Saleh al-Mutlaq barely escaped execution by Sunni Muslims when he visited the province of Anbar in 2012. Sunni protesters have been rallying in the area for more than a week to protest over second-class treatment by the Shiite-led government. The demonstrators insisted the Sunni official show support for their protest by submitting his resignation from the government. The appointment of Khaled al-Obeidi as Defense Minister may be considered as a kind of success reached by Iraqi Sunni community. He took over the position from Saadoun al-Dulaimi, his wishy-washy predecessor with dubious reputation who failed to get a permanent appointment and served as acting minister for three years. The new defense chief is a well-educated technocrat (a former military aeronautical engineer) never reported to have any relation to political squabbles. Pretty soon he was accused of ...oppressing Shia Muslims. The accusations were voiced in the parliament after the Defense Minister fired 29 Air Force officers.