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by Tanaka Sakai

The U.S. occupation of Iraq has become ever more chaotic. Last November, U.S. forces insisted that Fallujah, a Sunni town in central Iraq, was the hub of Iraq's guerrilla organisations, and launched an all-out attack. The Bush administration had been insisting that if U.S. troops wiped out the guerrillas there, resistance in other regions would easily be brought under control, and this would allow the general elections, planned for January 30th, to proceed smoothly. Japanese foreign affairs specialists also predicted that 'if the U.S. forces bring Fallujah under control, Iraq will become stable.'

The two-week operation in Fallujah that began on November 8th, however, ended as a major failure. As the plan was reported widely prior to the operation, the majority of guerrillas fled Fallujah. When the U.S. troops controlled the town, it was empty of guerrillas. The guerrillas later returned, and in the 70% of the region that was supposedly under U.S. control, began attacking. U.S. troops were unable to withdraw, and for an extended period they continued fighting in a location where the battle had supposedly ended.

Fallujah, located 60 km West of Baghdad, is a center of Sunni Muslim tradition. People there have strongly resisted outside conquerors. In 1920, when Britain crushed the Ottoman Empire and occupied Iraq for the first time, a British Lieutenant Colonel was killed in Fallujah. A battle involving British forces and armed citizens of Fallujah resulted in the deaths of 10,000 Fallujah citizens and 1,000 British soldiers. Similarly, but on a smaller scale, in early April 2003, just after the U.S. occupation had begun, a clash ended with U.S. troops killing 15 Fallujah citizens (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fallujah).

Guerrillas in Fallujah are of course greatly inferior in military equipment. Nevertheless, the U.S. operation failed to wipe them out because of the naivety of their analysis and plan. For example, the U.S. incorrectly defined the enemy. Although U.S. authorities had announced that the core of the guerrillas in Fallujah were 'foreign terrorists who belong to Al-Qaida, led by a Jordanian, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,' among some 1,000 guerrillas that U.S. troops captured, there were only 15 foreigners. The rest were Iraqis (http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/FK20Ak03.html).

Not until the mopping up operation was widely reported as a failure did U.S. authorities acknowledge that key members of the security force of the former Hussein's government (rather than Al-Qaida) were the heart of the Fallujah guerrillas (http://washingtontimes.com/upi-breaking/20041221-054639-7489r.htm).

The Illusion of Zarqawi

According to the U.S. authorities, Zarqawi is 'the central figure in the Iraqi guerrillas, 'an executive member of al-Qaida and more important than Osama Bin Laden.' U.S. authorities also insist that he kidnapped and beheaded a number of

foreigners including Japanese. The Bush administration seems intent on using his name to prove that Iraqi guerrillas are part of Al-Qaida and that the American occupation of Iraq is a part of the ''war against terror.' (http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/FK11Ak02.html)

Zarqawi is an Islamist militant, who spent 7 years in prison after his involvement in a conspiracy to overthrow the Jordanian monarchy in 1992. After imprisonment, in 1999, he was again involved in a terrorist attempt to blow up a hotel in Jordan, and then fled Jordan to Afghanistan. In 2001, he escaped from the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, and via Iran entered Kurdish regions in Northern Iraq. It has been reported that in Northern Iraq, he led an Islamist militant group with the name of Ansar Al-islam, which was affiliated with Al-Qaida, that he also approached Hussein's government, and after the U.S. attack, led the anti-US guerrillas (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Musab_al-Zarqawi) in the Sunni regions in central Iraq.

However, news of Zarqawi since 2001 is obscure. Following the Gulf War in 1991, because of the Anglo-American enforced no-fly zone, Northern Iraq could not be controlled by the Hussein government. Instead, the Kurds governed themselves with some help from America and Israel. So if the U.S. authorities had wished to crush Ansar al-Islam, they could have done so at any time; they did not because at that time the U.S. intended to use Ansar al-Islam as an anti-Hussein terrorist organisation. If Zarqawi was leading Ansar al-Islam, he was a terrorist to be used by America (http://atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/FJ15Ak02.html), not by Hussein.

A Result of Ignoring the Baath Party Going Underground

The centre of anti-U.S. guerrillas in Fallujah is not Zarqawi but associates and supporters of the military and secret police from the Hussein regime. They are Sunni Islamists but not Islamist militants. Hussein's Baath Party is a modernizing organisation that opposed the Islamic militants.

In March-April 2003, when U.S. troops attacked, Hussein's forces did not engage them. Instead they abandoned their tanks and pre-existing organisations, and went underground, becoming guerrillas. Many years prior to the invasion, the government had chosen an underground operations site in case of such an attack, and had taught key members of the secret police etc. guerrilla warfare tactics including the skills of improvising bombs (http://216.26.163.62/2004/me_iraq_11_18.html), using explosives that can be acquired easily.

As I wrote earlier in 'Trapped America' (http://tanakanews.com/d1111iraq.htm), the U.S. authorities knew about this through sources such as the United Nations weapons inspectors report, but they ignored it. After U.S. troops occupied Baghdad, insurgents looted, destroyed, and set fire to various Iraqi government offices, telephone centers, and power stations. It is highly likely that these acts were organised by the Hussein government, with the intention of making American rule difficult by destroying administrative information and economic infrastructure necessary for governance.

However, regarding this looting, too, the Pentagon remained a spectator although it could have prevented it by simply parking U.S. tanks near office gates and issuing warnings.

After that, too, the U.S. authorities continued offer completely incorrect analyses such as that 'the guerrillas are not a strong force' or 'the guerrillas belong to Al-Qaida's foreign terrorist group (and not the underground Baath Party).' In May 2003, Bremer, the chief of the CPA, purged the members of the Baath Party (with a membership of 400,000) from official positions and dissolved the Iraqi police and military

(http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,FL_choice_091404,00.html).

The purge of Baathists, who had the essential skills to maintain security and rebuild the country, was a failure. It was the antithesis of the successful U.S. policy in Japan during the 1940s, when the entire bureaucracy was kept intact. It seems that as a result of this policy, the number of Baathists who joined the guerrillas suddenly increased. The U.S. authorities only recently realised how serious the situation was, when the guerrillas' improvised bombs destroyed U.S. vehicles one after another and the number of war dead has kept increasing.

How explain the U.S. failures?

Policy-makers include many professional nation-builders who have attempted to rebuild nations in such places as post-war Japan, Germany, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. The overthrow of the Iraqi government was based on the U.S. grand conception of 'democratisation of the Middle East with force.' It is hard to understand, then, why there have been so many wrongheaded analyses and decisions, and why policies were so slow to change even after mistakes became obvious. The often-heard analysis, 'America always fails because of its arrogance,' also won't do.

So far, U.S. troops have attacked Fallujah twice, both failing in bizarre ways. On the first occasion, last April, the White House ordered an all-out attack as revenge for the killing of American mercenaries in Fallujah employed as subcontractors of the U.S. military. When the town was more or less under U.S. control, the White House changed course completely, leaving public order in Fallujah in the hands of the guerrillas. (http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,FL_choice_091404,00.html).

This is strange behaviour. People in the Middle East, including Iraq, who were following the situation on Al-Jazeera, concluded that 'guerrillas in Fallujah had defeated the U.S.' and that 'the U.S. army is weak in reality.' Fallujah guerrillas were hailed as heroes in Arab countries, and support increased both inside and outside Iraq, leading to stronger demands that U.S. troops withdraw.

Looking at these examples, one wonders whether there may be forces within the U.S. interested in seeing the war effort fail. With the terrorist incident of 9/11, too, U.S. air defence failed on just that day, significantly delaying emergency dispatch of fighters.

The guerrilla outwits U.S. forces in intelligence, too

Iraqi guerrilla organisations have not subsided, even after the arrest of Saddam Hussein . According to the intelligence of the interim Iraq government, 200,000 are currently participating in guerrilla activities. This outnumbers American troops in Iraq, who number 150,000.

Not only had the Hussein government prepared for guerrilla warfare before the war but the failure of occupation policy has made the majority of the Iraqi people anti-American, increasing support for the guerrillas. This suggests that the guerrillas may have considerable power. They have not exhausted their resources, and we can anticipate that they will gradually expand terrorism and test the limits of U.S. troops (http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,7374-1425022,00.html).

On the 8th of November, last year, just 4 days after the beginning of the attack on Fallujah, guerrilla activity spread to Mosul, a Northern Iraq town with a large number of Sunnis. The guerrillas attacked police stations and offices of political parties, and 75% of the police officers in Mosul abandoned their work place and left their

jobs.

Mosul's police chief himself deliberately allowed the guerrillas to take over a police box. He was later arrested by local Kurdish militia when they discovered this. (The population of Mosul is 2 million, of which 1 million are Sunnis, half a million are Kurds, and the rest are of Turkish origin and others.)There have been increasing incidents (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4036181.stm) in which Iraqi security force members are killed in guerrilla attacks.

Mosul has been relatively stable so far, and to make up for troop shortages, US forces have been training Iraqi police officers and security forces. However, that effort was wasted, and US solders again have to patrol the town. Every day, it becomes clearer that the Iraqi police and security forces which the US troops are relying on, cannot be trusted, as they disappear with every minor guerrilla disturbance. Seeing that the guerrillas were stronger, many quit police and security forces and went over to the guerrillas (http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/story.jsp?story=594312), whose fighting capacity has been improving.

On December 21st, an explosion in the dining hall of the U.S. military base in Mosul during meal time killed twenty-two people. This was said to have been a suicide bomb attack by a guerrilla soldier who had infiltrated the Iraqi security forces. This attack, which took place in the dining hall of the base, where soldiers are expected to be able to relax, symbolises the failure of the occupation of Iraq.

With this incident, the concern was raised that U.S. information has been leaking out via spies who penetrate U.S. facilities. The U.S., preoccupied with gathering information on Zarqawi, is now lagging behind the guerrillas (http://csmonitor.com/2004/1221/p01s03-woiq.html) in information gathering.

To increase the number of troops or to withdraw from Iraq?

After a series of events such, the American media has reported both that 'U.S. troops have completely lost the trust of the Iraqi people, and the occupation has failed. To prevent further depletion of the national resources, we should withdraw the troops soon.' Secondly, and, contrarily, however, they say that'if the U.S. troops were to withdraw, Iraq will fall into civil war. As the Iraqi security force cannot be trusted, there is no other choice but increasing the number of US troops.'

On the day following the suicide bombings in Mosul, The New York Times printed a front page story affirming total support for the continuation of the war. This article, insisted that 'there was no choice but to fight on,' and that 'reports on opinion polls that symbolise the feeling of war-weariness, are only benefiting the enemy.' The same paper, on November 8th, when the attack on Fallujah was launched, argued that 'the number of U.S. troops in Iraq should be increased by 40,000.'

On the other hand, the opinion that the U.S. should not increase the number of troops but withdraw has come not only from the anti-war intelligentsia but also from conservatives who oppose further waste of American resources. Among conservatives, the opinion that 'it is better to withdraw from Iraq soon' has been around since last April, when American troops failed in their first attack on Fallujah.

Public opinion divided between increasing troop numbers and withdrawing, but on December 20th, the Bush administration declared that it would increase the number of US troops in Iraq around the January election, and that this level would be maintained throughout the year, suggesting a long-term occupation. Bush did not choose withdrawal, but chose to increase troop numbers. This move may require

(http://fairuse.1accesshost.com/news2/latimes465.html) conscription (http://fairuse.1accesshost.com/news2/latimes465.html).

America cannot win

However, if the U.S. increases the number of soldiers, guerrilla attacks will become more extreme, prolonging the fighting. The American occupation of Iraq will not succeed. In order for the occupation to succeed, the Iraqi people would have to support it. Increasing numbers of U.S. troops will have the opposite effect. (http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/FL01Ak01.html)

As those who argue for a withdrawal insist, America is already hated by the Iraqi people. American defeat is already clear. The only question is whether defeat comes sooner or later. The longer it takes, the more national resources will be squandered, with the side effect of loss of U.S. position as world hegemon (http://www.thetruthseeker.co.uk/article.asp?ID=2618).

If this is correct, a Japan that sees its national interest in subordination to a hegemonic U.S., should recommend early U.S. withdrawal from Iraq to avoid further squandering American resources.

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