

# Iraq Disintegrating in Fight Over Constitution

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Iraq may turn out to be the first country in modern history to self-destruct through a constitutional process. The draft constitution, to be submitted to a national referendum on Oct. 15, was drawn up under the guiding hand of U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, whose intention must have been to lay the basis for partition of the nation.

For, this is the thrust of the document. Against the loud protests of Sunni members of the commission, a draft was completed which calls for Iraq to be a federal state, whose current and future “regions” are shaped so as to become independent entities. Ethnic and religious differences are exacerbated, not overcome, in the document, and corresponding militias are given the right to continue to exist, creating the conditions for possible civil war.

It is no wonder that the Sunni minority (which used to be the ruling force in the central government) rejected the draft, and mobilized its forces to defeat it in the referendum, by mustering a two-thirds majority against it, in three provinces of the country. No wonder that Amr Moussa, Secretary-General of the Arab League, denounced the text as a “recipe for chaos.”

## No Nation, Only Regions

Just why the Sunnis have rejected the draft constitution, is clear in that document’s formulations defining the country. The preamble states: “the Federal Republic of Iraq is made up of a capital, regions, decentralized provincial and local administrations” (Article 113), and “the Iraqi regime is republican, federal, democratic, and pluralist.” The draft constitution, once adopted, is to recognize the Kurdistan region, which has enjoyed relative autonomy since 1992. The Sunnis had argued for the text to be changed, such that Iraq is a country with “one capital, one province, decentralized governorates and a local administration”—that is, a unified nation with a strong central government.

Not only is the Kurdish region (which Kurdish leaders already refer to as “Kurdistan”), to be recognized as an autonomous entity, but other regions may also be established (Articles 115-117). “After six months,” so reads the draft, “parliament in its first meeting will vote by simple majority on a law regulating the creation of regions. One or more provinces have the right to create a region. Regional governments have the right to exercise legislative, executive, and judicial powers, except for the prerogatives reserved for the federal author-

ities.” These prerogatives include foreign, defense, monetary, and trade policy. And, furthermore: “Governorates that are not integrated in a region will be given administrative jurisdiction and adequate financial capacity to administer themselves according to the principles of decentralization. The governorates’ cabinet is not placed under the control of any minister or other institution.”

Although lip service is paid to the idea of integrating existing militias into a national military force (in Article 9), each federal region has a right to its own security forces, according to Article 118. This means the Kurdish Peshmerga in the north, and the Shi’ite Badr Brigades, in the likely event of the emergence of a southern region, would remain as standing armies of their regions. The regions would also have a right to their own constitution and laws.

The economic aspect of this carving up the country, is another reason why the Sunnis rejected it. Iraq’s massive oil reserves are found in the northern Kurdish and southern Shi’ite areas. The text says “oil and gas are the property of all the Iraqi people,” but, the federal government manages oil and gas extracted from “current wells” in collaboration with producing regions and provinces. As for future explorations and oil finds, the text allocates a “specific quota” to the provinces oppressed by Saddam Hussein’s regime, i.e. those inhabited by the Kurds and Shi’ites. The Sunnis are located geographically in the center of the country, where there is no oil.

Adding insult to injury, the text goes so far as to deny Iraq its Arab identity. The text says Iraq is “a multinational, multi-confessional, and multicultural country. It is part of the Muslim world and *its Arab people* are part of the Arab nation”—but not the country as a whole! Sunnis demanded that this be changed, but to no avail. The draft states that Arabic and Kurdish are official languages, for parliament, the cabinet, and courts, whereas the Sunnis argued that Kurdish should be restricted to the Kurdish region. Other languages, of the Armenians, Turkmen, and Assyrians are to be allowed locally in schools.

Much has been made in the international press, of the role allocated by the constitution to Islam: it is “the religion of the state and a main source of legislation and the constitution guarantees freedom of religion and freedom to practice religion.” Concern over this is vastly exaggerated, considering that many constitutions in the Arab world have similar wording. However, it is feared that the judges of the constitutional court (Article 90), who are to be drawn from “judges and experts of Islamic law,” might open the way for Shi’ite religious leaders to take over and to introduce an Iranian-style system. Religious freedom is guaranteed to non-Muslims, specifically Christians, Sabaeans, and Yezids.

Another issue that has raised international concern, is women’s rights, which are not specifically defined. Rather, there is a non-discrimination clause, and women are to get up to 25% seats in parliament.

However important, these are side issues. The real seed of Iraq's self-destruction lies in the federal structure, as defined above. Thus, the immediate cries of alarm from high-ranking personalities in the Arab world like Amr Moussa. Speaking to the BBC's "World Today" program, he stated: "I share the concerns of many Iraqis about the lack of consensus on the constitution." He went on to address the denial of Iraq's "Arab identity." "I do not believe in this division between Shi'a, and Sunni, and Muslims, and Christians, and Arabs, and Kurds," he said. "I don't buy this and I find in this a true recipe for chaos, and perhaps a catastrophe in Iraq and around it." Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General Abdel Rahman al-Attiya added his voice of dissent, saying the Iraqis should review this "disastrous" draft to maintain the territorial integrity and unity of Iraq.

Catastrophe is indeed on the horizon, unless this process is reversed.

Instead of integrating the various ethnic, religious, and political forces into a united nation, the constitution spells out the means by which to divide them and pit them, one against the other. Instead of reversing the disastrous de-Baathification policy imposed by then-proconsul Paul Bremer, the constitution explicitly bans "the Saddamist Baath and its symbols." Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari made clear what this would mean, when he said, "Baathists have no place in the new Iraq."

The Sunni response is to have recourse to the only instrument at their disposal: the referendum vote. Immediately after the reported completion of the draft, they geared up a voter registration drive, to ensure a two-thirds majority in three of the four provinces where they constitute a majority. If this occurs, the draft will be rejected, and a new commission will be formed to write a new constitution. If not, it will be adopted, but not by the Sunnis. This means possible civil war.

### Failed States As Policy

Either way, as Lyndon LaRouche stressed, Iraq is being broken up, and that must be the intention of the neo-con gang which forced this constitution on its puppets in Iraq. What is being carried out there, is a U.S.-British scheme to create a band of failed states, running from Iraq through Afghanistan. The partition of Iraq, as prescribed in the constitution, is under way, as part of a policy to create a zone of ungovernability in Southwest and Central Asia. One of the instruments for this,



DoD/Army Pfc. Ferdinand Thomas

*U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at a Baghdad press conference in May with Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari. The new constitution will lead to the breakup of Iraq and probable civil war—as seems to be the intention.*

is the pseudo-gangs now targeting civilians in Iraq, which are reportedly instruments of foreign secret services. The long-term objective of creating and spreading this instability, is to make a case for world government.

Elsewhere in the region, this very scenario is being played out. U.S. policy towards Iran, the neighbor which *could* play a stabilizing role in Iraq (and Afghanistan), is nothing short of belligerent. President George W. Bush merely stoked the raging fires further, when, from his vacation site, he stated that "all options" were on the table vis-à-vis Iran, and reminded the world that he had already gone to war, in Iraq, to defend U.S. interests.

U.S. policy towards Syria, another crucial neighbor of Iraq, has been increasingly provocative; not only did U.S. planes bomb three houses in Iraq, near the Syrian border on Aug. 30, but reports are that Bush, together with the French, wants to impose sanctions on Syria. The situation in nearby Lebanon, where a United Nations commission is completing its investigation into the murder of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, is reaching fever pitch: Intelligence reports, indicating that leading political figures and journalists may be targeted for assassination, have sent several Lebanese figures into temporary exile in France. Any such assassination would be presumably laid at Syria's doorstep.

Ergo: either U.S. policy changes, through forceful action by a returning Senate and House of Representatives, or Southwest Asia is about to go up in flames.