

XXX. The Execution of Saddam Hussein: An Appalling Milestone for Disturbing Developments

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Abstract: Saddam Hussein's execution on Saturday December 31, 2006 and its broadcast over the internet in the form of video footage "leaked" by one of the bystanders constitutes a milestone of important geostrategic developments in the Middle East, mainly as a multiplier of the Shia-Sunni tension, between the followers of Moktanta al Sadr and the Sunnis, between the Shiites of Tehran and the Lebanese Muslims (Shiites and Sunnis). The execution also triggered a chain reaction of the Kurdish ethnic pockets in the area, starting with Iraqi Kurdistan. This reaction engages Turkey in the issue of geostrategic reshuffling in the area and provides its military regime with the opportunity to use this threat to achieve EU tolerance as regards the country's accession process without having to implement the necessary adjustments stipulated by the "acquis communautaire" and without trying to clear the "Cyprus hurdle" in the course of the entry talks. Greece and Cyprus must adopt a coordinated approach at all levels to deal with this situation, in which even "hot conflict provocations" by Turkey against Greece, but also an increase of pressure from across the Atlantic directed against Levkosia and Athens, cannot be ruled out.¹

Keywords: Saddam, Kurds, border reshuffling in the Middle East, Santr, Turkey, Cyprus.

1. Disclaimer: the views expressed in this article are the sole responsibility of the author.

A. Introduction/Background

Saddam Hussein was sentenced to death by hanging on November 5, 2006 by the Iraqi Supreme Court over the murder of 148 Shiite civilians in the town of Dujail (north of Baghdad). His appeal was rejected by the court on December 26, 2006. His execution by hanging at dawn on December 31, 2006 was witnessed by Shiite followers of Moktanta al Sadr and Shiite hooded executioners, and took place at the 5th Division intelligence office in Qadhimiya (in the mainly Shiite populated northern part of Baghdad).

Born in this area –coincidentally (?)– was the high ranking, (assassinated by the Saddam government) Shiite cleric Mohammad Bakir as-Sadr, father in-law of today’s radical Sheikh of the Iraqi Shiites Moktanta as-Sadr and cousin to Mohammad Sadeq as-Sadr (assassinated by the Saddam government in 1999) and Imam Musa as-Sadr. It is of great symbolic importance to underline that the assassinated Mohammad as-Sadr, while one of Ayatollah Khomeini’s closest friends and collaborators, disagreed with him on the issue of the “velayat-e-faqih” (the guardianship of jurisprudence), that is the theocratic model of government in force today in Tehran. One of the bystanders used his cell-phone to film a 2 minutes 38 seconds video of the whole procedure. Part of the video, which did not show the time of death but the 20 seconds before that, was broadcasted by the state TV station *al-Iraqiyya* without sound.

B. Questions:

1) Why was the whole video allowed to “leak out” in the internet **since its owner was known?** We can easily deduce that they were known to the authorities, because the authorities used the video in the state TV station. What is the point now of ordering an official inquiry in order to arrest, in the end, those who are already known and have already cooperated with the authorities for the very same video!

2) Why was the procedure of the execution not upheld and why were those **Shiite chants focusing on the Sadr family, which the internet spread all over the world, heard?** At this point it is worth remembering that today’s radical Sheikh Moktanta as Sadr is the son-in-law of

the high-ranking Shiite cleric and intellectual Mohammad Bakir as-Sadr and the son of the Grand Ayatollah of Iraq Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr² who were both assassinated by the Saddam government on April 8, 1980 and February 19, 1999, respectively! It must be noted that the Sadr family are “Sayyid” a term generally used among the Shia to denote persons descending directly from the bloodline of the prophet Mohammad, in particular, from the 7th Grand Imam of the Shia dogma, the Grand Imam Musa al-Kahdim.

3) Why was it not seen to that friends and relatives of the above were not in the room but, quite the opposite, were the ones specifically chosen?

Conclusions derived from the questions: it is thus evident from the facts that the video “had” to leak out because the reactions it provoked were, in the end, desired by the instigators of the leak, whoever they might be. What were, though, the expected reactions if the following are considered?

i) at the end of September the Prime Minister of Iraqi Kurdistan, Mr. Nêçîrvan Îdrîs Barzanî, stated: “the people of Kurdistan claim the right to control their oil reserves (i.e. Mosul and Kirkuk) and any wrongdoing, external intervention or civil conflict would inevitably lead to the Kurdish side pursuing the independence of Kurdistan”;

ii) the (since 2005) President of Iraqi Kurdistan, Mr. Mesûd Barzanî, stated in October of 2006, in Arbil, the capital of North Iraqi Kurdistan, in the presence of Condoleezza Rice and flanked by the Kurdish (!) and American (!) flags and not the Iraqi flag, that “Kurdistan, as any other nation, has the right to self-determination”. After all, Iraqi Kurdistan already meets all the requirements of a state body (flag, parliament, armed forces, police force, etc.);

iii) there is already talk in the American media of a Sunni-Shia civil war in Iraq and if this term is adopted by the American government, it will provide the Kurdish leaders above with every moral footing to pursue the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan;

2. We should stress the fact that Sadeq al-Sadr was the father of the Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq as-Sadr who was assassinated during the Saddam government in 1999.

iv) the creation of an Iraqi Kurdistan constitutes the best strategic island for the United Kingdom and the USA, but also for Israel, for the next – at least – century, with the best quality oil reserves (Light Kirkuk) at the lowest cost per barrel (1 \$US/b);

v) already from January 2005, the Kurds of Iraqi Kurdistan, in an unofficial referendum, voted almost unanimously (95%) in favor of an independent Kurdish ethnic state;

vi) the possible creation of a Great Kurdistan will have a destabilising effect on the Syrian regime, but also on Iran, two members of the “axis of evil”, and will force, at least initially, Tehran and Damascus to be henceforth more “flexible” in their relations with Washington; and

vii) if a Great Kurdistan with a population of 30 million people covering an area from Kirkuk to Nakhichevan is finally founded, this region will be under the control of the creators/supporters of this state, which means that, on the one hand, the waters of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates and, on the other, all oil routes from Baku to Ceyhan will be controlled by a Kurdish government completely loyal to the American superpower.

So, ultimately, this whole region will be under control; a region which produces and transports everywhere, the biggest and the best quality oil resources in the world and which controls the strategically important water potential of the Middle East.

The question needs no answer. The facts speak for themselves.

However, it would be very interesting to remember all those well-substantiated opinions which, for a year now, have put forward the notion that the only way to disengage American forces from Iraq is to divide the country into three separate states. I am referring to personalities such as:

1) American ambassador **Mr. Peter Galbraith**, on the side of the Democratic Party, who is unequivocally in favor of a solution in the form of an independent Iraqi Kurdistan and has authored many articles and an important book on the issue of the war in Iraq.³ The ambassa-

3. Peter W. Galbraith served as the first US Ambassador to Croatia. He was Director for Political, Constitutional and Electoral Affairs for the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and senior advisor to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Iraq. He was a Professor of National

dor stresses that “the enormous influence of Iran on the Iraqi government but also on the Shiite south of the country will be the reason that will lead to the creation of an independent Kurdistan”. In light of this he proposes the establishment of a loose confederacy in Iraq around a weak central government which will be the prelude to an independent Kurdistan. What’s more, he supports my view with a characteristic statement: “*The Sunni insurgency can only be defeated by the Sunni Arabs. The constitution allows them to form their own region and have their own military. A Sunni-Arab regional government and regional military may be able to win enough support to take on, or co-opt, many of the insurgents. An Iraqi Army loyal to a pro-Iranian Shiite government (and led by Shiites and Kurds) will never be seen as a national army by the Sunni Arabs*”;⁴

2) **Dr. Shlomo Avineri**,⁵ a professor of political science at the He-

Security Strategy at the National War College in Washington DC and is the Senior Diplomatic Fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation and a principal at the Windham Resources Group LLC. He is the author of numerous articles on Iraq, including six widely discussed articles in the *New York Review of Books*: «How to Get out of Iraq» (April 2004) and «Iraq: Bungled Transition» (September 2004), «Iraq: Bush’s Islamic Republic» (August 2005) and «Last Chance for Iraq» (October 2005) and «"Bremer’s Mess» (March 2006). His book, *The End of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created a War without End*, (Simon and Schuster), was released on July 11, 2006.

4. See the ambassador’s interview by Michael Young, November 29 2005, <http://goo.gl/udxJlh>.
5. He served as Director of Eshkol Research Institute (1971-74); Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences (1974-76); and Director of the Institute for European Studies (1997 to present). Professor Avineri has had numerous visiting appointments including Yale University; Wesleyan University; Australian National University; Cornell University; University of California; Queen’s College; and Oxford. He has been a visiting scholar at the Wilson Center and Brookings Institute in Washington, DC and at the Institute of World Economics and International Relations in Moscow. Professor Avineri served as Director-General of Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1975-77. He also headed the Israeli delegation to the UNESCO General Assembly and in 1979 he was a member of the joint Egyptian-Israeli commission that drafted the Cultural and Scientific Agreement between the two countries. He wrote numerous books, some of which are: *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, *Israel and the Palestinians*, *Marx’ Socialism*, *Hegel’s Theory of the Modern State*, *Varieties of Marxism*, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, *Mo-*

brew University of Jerusalem who served as Director-General of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1975-1977) in a brave article in the *Jerusalem Post*⁶ explains that the Iraqi constitution of August 8, 2005 is fraught with contradictions that will inevitably lead to the «division of Iraq»;

3) **Dr. John Yoo**,⁷ former legal advisor to President George Bush, a professor of law at the University of California at Berkeley School of Law (Boalt Hall), is quite forthcoming when it comes to speaking his mind about dividing Iraq into three parts, something he also considers inevitable.⁸ He is very critical of the Bush administration because “they are spending blood and treasure to preserve a country that no longer makes sense as a state”. He remarks that the USA must realise, at some point, that «countries collapse» and cites the former USSR as an example suggesting that Afghanistan and Iraq will share its fate, and proposes the fragmentation of Yugoslavia as a case study;

4) **Dr. Noah Feldman**, a professor of law at New York University of Law and former Senior Adviser for Constitutional Law of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq. Although he speaks well of the New Iraq Constitution, he concludes, as the others, that Iraq will be torn apart; and

5) **Al-Bari Atwan**, editor-in-chief of the Palestinian newspaper *Al Quds al Arabi*, predicted that the Bush administration would attempt to divide Iraq by means of the Constitution of August 8, 2005. According to his –rather successful– predictions, the division of the ethnic-religious groups inherent in the Constitution should permit the withdrawal of the American forces from Iraq before the Senatorial and Con-

ses Hess: Prophet of Communism and Zionism, Arlosorof: A Political Biography, Communism and Individualism (co-author); and an historical introduction to the Hebrew edition of Theodore Herzl's *Diaries*.

6. S. Avineri, «Long Litany of Contradictions», «*Jerusalem Post*», August 28, 2005.

7. John Yoo is a Professor of Law at the University of California at Berkeley School of Law (Boalt Hall), a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a member of the Federalist Society and a researcher for the (neo-conservative) American Enterprise Institute, and served under John Ashcroft as a deputy-assistant attorney general in the Office of Legal Counsel of the US Department of Justice (2001-2003).

8. John Yoo, «A united Iraq-what's the point?», «*Los Angeles Times*», August 25, 2005.

gressional Elections in the USA, in November 2006, in the firm belief that the “Iraqi resistance” can only be defeated by dividing the country. President Bush, of course, was not as smart in his thinking as the Palestinian journalist, but, after his defeat at the November elections, it has certainly dawned on him that this is indeed the best method to call back the American troops and shift the crisis, in the form of a civil war, to the interior of an Iraq that is falling apart.

It is now that this leaking of Saddam’s execution video and this entire “Shiite vernacular” is becoming all the more obvious to us. One more thing: This entire Shiite vernacular focusing on the Sadr family, the most anti-American southern Shiite faction operating mainly out of Baghdad, can be interpreted in four layers:

1) The first layer is that, on the one hand, it turns the Sunnis and the Saddamist Baathists against the anti-American Sadr and, on the other hand, it turns Sadr against them, which diminishes the forces of both sides. It is thus possible that Washington has better chances of approaching the prominent Iraqi Baathists in Damascus (e.g. Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri but also Mohammad Younis al-Ahmad) because, sooner or later, their Iraqi forces will face very strong “hot” pressure from the Shiite militia of Moktanta as-Sadr.

2) The second layer is that it works against the Arab-Muslim unity in Lebanon with Hezbollah missing the opportunity to form a united Arab-Muslim front against the Siniora government, a feat almost achieved after the last marches and demonstrations in Lebanon.

3) Iran is now losing a great portion of its power in the entire Iraqi territory and remains with only a fraction of the Shiites of the south, a fact which forces it to lower the bar as regards its demands to Washington.

4) On the other hand, Damascus is in no position, after a Sunni-Shia-Baath civil war to “fish in the murky waters of Lebanon” for influence in Beirut. So, its negotiating power is diminished against Washington.

C. The matter of Turkey’s reaction

The other issue, though, is Turkey and its sincere and “negotiatory-type” concern over the Kurdish hot chain reaction spreading to its territory.

But what is the problem for Turkey as regards the Kurds in its territory? It is one and only one, and Greece should not accept any speculations nor adopt any other position. The problem is the behavior displayed to date by all post-Kemal governments against the Kurds in Turkey, behavior which was severely lacking in any element of humanitarianism, political, ideological and cultural freedom for the Kurdish population.

The persecutions, imprisonment and all kinds of exclusions (political, cultural, language, etc.) suffered by the Kurds are to blame for any (real or imaginary) Turkish fears and not the Kurds themselves.

This behavior on the part of Ankara must change, and in order for it to change the Turkish regime must be denounced by the international community (EU and USA), so as to eliminate any factor of instability present in the Kurds of Turkey.

If we accept that, as Turkey professes, the Kurds constitute a risk, a question should immediately be put to Ankara in any possible diplomatic and journalistic manner: namely, what benefit exactly would Turkey reap from becoming an EU Member State if it still retained the same views as regards human rights and political and cultural freedom of the Turkish citizens of the Kurdish ethnic persuasion. On the contrary, the implementation of the “*acquis communautaire*” in a Turkey facing a Kurdish minority problem would intensify the problem, if Ankara is not prepared to meet EU requirements, unless if Turkey intends, when – at some point – she becomes a full member of the EU, to maintain this behavior towards its citizens of the Kurdish ethnic persuasion, but this time in the context of the legal and political culture of the EU.

If that is the case, we should be talking about a “Turkification” of the EU instead of an “Europeanization” of Turkey! We could explain, as it were, to the Turkish officials that this treatment of its European-Kurdish citizens does not in any case agree with the “*acquis communautaire*” and the European legal, political and cultural framework, and that it should conform accordingly.

Conclusions:

1) Turkey has nothing to gain from a hurried accession to the EU if, prior to that, it has not conformed to the “acquis communautaire” and if it has not solved its internal problems with the Kurds and the other minorities in the country.

2) The accession of Turkey with its minority problems, and especially the one of the Kurdish population, unresolved, would lead to the relocation of the alleged civil war to the very heart of the European Union and would make the EU a tactical battlefield and a venue of terrorism. Cruelty and violence are responsible for any Turkish fears of a Kurdish uprising and not the civilised action taken in the form of Europe’s demands.

There is, probably, little more to say on the matter.

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