

The Iraqi Lesson

While it is impossible to make a moral judgment to the collapse of Saddam Hussein's government of Iraq for people outside of the Middle East region, it is also difficult for the Iraqi people and the Arab world to respond to Baghdad's fall beyond emotional anger, shock, and disappointment.

For some, such as the Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and the Gaza Strip-based Arab Liberation Front (which had distributed Iraqi money to Palestinian suicide bomber families), Saddam Hussein is a political leader of an Arab state against Israeli Zionism and American Imperialism. For many, Saddam Hussein has been viewed as an Arab underdog struggling against foreign invaders interested in Iraqi oil. For most Iraqis (especially the Shi'ite people), much like other oppressive regimes everywhere in the world, Saddam Hussein is a nationalistic dictator. These people are unwilling or unable to remove Saddam Hussein from power.

The only force which removed Saddam Hussein from power, with or without excuse, is the sole superpower today, and the pretexts ("terrorist" connections or weapons of mass destruction) to invade Iraq have no legitimacy. The "Operation Iraqi Freedom" is simply a criminal aggression and illegal occupation. As stated by one of Iraq's neighboring Arab states, the international community, especially the UN, should exert every possible effort to put an end to the occupation and manage the catastrophic situation resulting from the aggression. The aggression countries should be responsible for and be limited only to the humanitarian tasks in post-war Iraq because they caused the catastrophe directly. The Iraqi people should have a brighter future beyond living under either dictatorship or occupation.

The photograph of the pulling down Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad reminded the collapse of Lenin's statue and the poverty and political turmoil in Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union. For most socialists in the world today, it is offensive to regard Saddam Hussein a "socialist with Iraqi characteristics". However, Saddam Hussein does have some in common with Lenin.

Tactically, they both utilized foreign imperialist forces. Lenin utilized the German Empire to archive his purpose while the much weaker Saddam Hussein was eventually killed by American Imperialism. When you are weak, be cautious to "utilize" your enemy's enemy.

During the Arab nationalist movement against Zionism and Imperialism, Saddam Hussein, along with other Arabian political leaders, adopted "socialism" to guide their struggles. What they knew of socialism, as an alternative to the American capitalism, however, was the Soviet Union's one-party political system.

The Egyptian Revolution of 1952 imposed "socialism with Egyptian characteristics" under Nasser's Arab Socialist Union, the one party of the Egyptian political system (Refer to Boutros Boutros-Ghali: Egypt's Road to Jerusalem. New York: Random House,

1997). However, Egypt, the leader of Arab world, was the first to kowtow to Israel (Sadat) and Pentagon (Mubarak). Only by serving Zionism and Imperialism to oppress its own nationalism, the Egyptian one-party “socialist” system survived.

The Baath Arab Socialist Party in Iraqi (and another part of the party in Syria) refused to serve Zionism and Imperialism, but Iraqi regime’s quick collapse proves that one party system has even lost its primary function of national defense because the regime has been abandoned by its own people long before the military attack. Among millions of anti-war protesters, few are for Saddam Hussein. Indeed, as some Arab wished, he should have gone into exile instead of sacrificing his people in a war with the American invaders. Yet for peoples under one party system, the best choice is to conduct “regime change” by themselves rather than to be invaded or occupied. Who will fight for Kim Jong Il, Bashar Al-Assad or Fidel Castro if the Bush Administration decides to “liberate” the DPRK (North Korean), Syria or Cuban people tomorrow?

Lenin is a great socialist, even though with the sin of “inventing” one party system under the historical condition to establish the first (flawed) socialist state in the world; Saddam Hussein is a pseudo-socialist of criminal dictatorship. The one party system could not avoid dictatorship to destroy socialism. The one party system generates corruptions to betray socialism. For the revival of genuine socialism, from the political lesson of the Iraqi problem, we must denounce and abandon the pseudo-socialism of one-party system.

Jing Zhao
US-Japan-China Comparative Policy Research Institute, San Jose, USA
<http://cpri.tripod.com>
April 2003