

Who Is Gonna End up Holding the Bag in Iraq?

Middle East has been a quagmire long before the occupation of Iraq by U.S and U.K in 2003 or even before so-called “Arab Spring” in 2010. It has been divided by sectarian lines since the Battle of Karbala in 680 A.D. 1500 years may seem like enough time to solve any issues between different sects. However, no Middle Eastern government has attempted to solve this problem since it involves some deeply-rooted hostility which has the potential to explode the whole region. Dictators who held an iron fist over their populations has been an internationally accepted way of dealing with the issue. Then, Pandora’s Box opened in 2003 after the invasion of Iraq. Any writing about the Middle East cannot escape from a short history lesson. Yazid I destroyed a small band of Hussein supporters in the Battle of Karbala. Why does this event has any significance? Because Hussein was one the grandchildren of Mohammed (prophet of Islam) and the son Ali who happen to be both nephew and son in-law of Mohammed. Hussein and his 6-month old son were amongst the killed at Karbala. Basically, followers of Ali has been called Shia, and the followers of Yazid has become known as Sunnis since then. Hence, the seemingly unsolvable sectarian quagmire in the Middle East for ages. Iraq has been long run by Sunni minority through Ba’ath Party, just as Syria, but majority of its population was Shiite. Shiites got to form the government after U.S/U.K invasion. Any hope for democracy fell short when Saudi Arabia smelled the blood in muddy waters of the Middle East. The lack of civil society, free press should also be mentioned as to show that it was very unlikely for a viable democracy take roots in Iraq, even without Saudi influence. Motivated by their desire to export Saudi version of Sharia system to other muslim countries, Saudi Arabia seized the opportunity to corner Iran which now is neighbored by another Shiite regime, in Iraq. Saudi Arabia which advocates Wahhabi school of thought which is the most radical Sunni interpretation of Islam has been the archenemy of Iran that has been ruled by Sharia law according to Shia school of thought since 1979 Iranian Revolution. It should be mentioned that Saudi Arabia has been the main financier behind Al-Qaida which attacked U.S on 9/11 with 19

hijackers of whom 15 were Saudi citizens.

Saudi Arabia started to funnel billions of dollars of financial support and weaponry to Sunni extremists in Iraq and Syria. Joining by Islamic emirate Qatar and Sunni Islamist government of Turkey, Saudi Arabia has been successfully able to fund the ongoing bloodshed in both Iraq and Syria. ISIL (The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and also known as ISIS) which was once a part of Al-Qaida that has been funded by the said trio, has been wreaking havoc in Syria and then Iraq. ISIL has been framed as “freedom fighters” and “fighting against brutal Syrian government”, in the media, for quite some time. As graphic and violent details and reports of ISIL activities in Syria started surfacing, it became an futile effort to deny the true identity of ISIL. ISIL failed to overthrow Basir Assad government in Syria, a close ally of both Russia and Iran. Instead of withdrawing forces and regrouping them, ISIL decided to seize Iraq in one big, bloody scoop. ISIL has captured Mosul (second biggest city in Iraq), Tikrit (hometown of Saddam Hussein) in just 24 hours. Now, they are headed to Baghdad. While writing this blog, reports of the fall Tel-Afar which is populated mostly by Shiite Turkmens, came through. ISIL declared that Sharia law has been implemented in cities that are now under ISIL control and that they will not harm civilians, unless they are Shiites. ISIL also summary executed more than 1700 Iraqi soldiers. ISIL seized Turkish Consulate in Mosul, holding +80 Turkish citizens as hostages. They also took 32 Turkish truck drivers as hostages. Iran has already sent its elite forces to the help of Shiite Iraqi government to prevent its capitulation to ISIL forces. Chuck Hagel, Defense Secretary of U.S, has ordered aircraft carrier USS George H.W.Bush to move from North Arabian Sea to Arabian Gulf. Iranian and U.S security forces are in the same sentence. Middle East make strange bed fellows, indeed. Kurdish groups seem to be the only beneficiary of current situation. They captured oil-rich Kirkuk, amid turmoil with ISIL. Kurds consider Kirkuk as their historical capital. Kurds have already been fighting against Iranian and Turkish states through terrorist organizations, PJAK in Iran and PKK in Turkey,

for decades. Right now, Turkey is between a rock and a hard place. Islamist AKP government has become a substantial trade partner with Kurdish government in Northern Iraq which is led by Masoud Barzani. It has proved to be a lucrative partnership for both sides. Recently, Kurdish government entered to an agreement with Turkish government to use Ceyhan port, in Turkey, to export Kurdish oil to European markets despite the protests of federal Al-Maliki government in Baghdad. On the other hand, the capture of Kirkuk by Kurdish forces stokes Turkish government's long-time fears of an independent Kurdish state which will surely lay claim to Turkey's Southeastern provinces. Being the worst kept secret, an ally of both U.S.A and Israel in the region, no legal or military action will be taken against Saudi Arabia for its role in human tragedy happening in Iraq and/or Syria. Tony Blair, PM of Great Britain during the invasion of Iraq, recently stated that Great Britain bears no responsibility regarding the turmoil in Iraq. George W. Bush, in the meantime, dedicated himself to the fine arts, expressing his emotions through water-color paintings, seems to have lost interest in the matter. Considering Qatar is just another satellite in Saudi orbit, Turkey seems to be the most likely candidate to hold the bag for the disastrous situation in Iraq. Turkey's Islamist AKP government's monetary, military and logistic help to ISIL has been well documented so far. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, islamist PM of Turkey has already became famous for his dislike of Alevites (Anatolian Shiites) in Turkey. Repeatedly warned by U.S government for its involvement with ISIL, Turkish government's big dream about 'reclaiming Pax Otomana' and becoming a force to reckon within the region, seem to come to an alarming halt. Losing its credibility and prestige in international arena because of its connections with ISIL combining with significant loss of territories to an almost imminent Kurdistan will be a tough sell to both domestic and international audiences of Islamist AKP government in Turkey. However, the most worrisome possibility is that Turkey may be tried and found guilty in ICC (International Criminal Court) for not only its contribution to ISIL's funding and arming, but more importantly abetting and aiding ISIL militants within Turkey.