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# Middle East

Jul 6, 2007

## THE ROVING EYE

### Iraq, the new Israel

Comment by Pepe Escobar

*Why do we fear words?*

*Some words are secret bells, the echoes of their tone announce the start of a magic and abundant time*

*steeped in feeling and life.*

*So why should we fear words?*

- Nazik al-Mala'ikah, female Iraqi poet, who died on June 20 in

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Cairo of Parkinson's disease, aged 85

Lame-duck US President George W Bush, last week in a speech at the US Naval War College, made it official: Israel is the model for Iraq, although Iraq is rather more like Palestine.

Anyone familiar with the Arab world knows Israel is viewed all across the Middle East as a Western-configured colonial power, illegally gobbling up Palestinian land and treating its own Arab residents as third-rate citizens. Bush's Israeli Iraq - rather Americastan in Iraq, as it is known in many quarters in Baghdad - amounts to nothing less than a public relations nightmare in terms of the US "message" for the wider Middle East.

The endless Palestinian tragedy - the cancer at the root of every problem in the Middle East - now has officially spread to Mesopotamia. The disease is man-made. Not that the White House is losing any sleep over it. Bush may even have had a Nero-like impulse to add fuel to the burning of Rome, ie Baghdad: after all, the Zio-con objective is to encourage civil war in Iraq on a divide-and-rule basis.

Iraq's Palestinians are the minority Sunni Arabs - moderates included, and certainly, at least in the thinking of Bush and his vice president, Dick Cheney, Shi'ite followers of Muqtada al-Sadr. That leaves little else than the Kurds as "Israelis"; mountainous Iraqi Kurdistan, anyway, has been infested with Israeli intelligence

services for years.

Not only Bush dreams of an Israeli Iraq; evildoers identify the dream for what it is. Any self-respecting jihadist website in the Arab world and any self-respecting Salafi-jihadist cleric characterizes the occupation as an anti-Sunni, US-Shi'ite coalition. Thus Sunni Arabs are indeed widely viewed in the Arab world as Palestinians.

### **Gimme my benchmark**

Meanwhile real life - or survival in the heart of darkness - remains bleak. Most areas in Baghdad are "red" or "dark pink" - meaning the odds of one seeing the sun rising day after day range from 10% to a maximum of 30%. The National Association of British Arabs, in a report by Dr Ismail Jalili to the House of Lords Commission on Iraq, has detailed only part of the horrendous, systematic decimation of Iraq's intelligentsia: 830 documented assassinations since 2003, including 380 academics and doctors, 210 lawyers and judges, and 243 journalists.

Washington's Holy Grail - or Benchmark Supreme - remains the Oil Law. Only 24 of 37 Iraqi cabinet ministers have approved the made-in-Washington draft of the law - which should have been presented for discussion in Parliament this Wednesday. The Kurds have already leaked that they are against it - the terms, not the law in itself. The Sadrist, virtually all Sunni parties and the overwhelming majority of Iraq's population - if they had access to the text - are against handing over the nation's wealth to Anglo-American Big Oil.

For security reasons - the Israeli-as-Iraq government cannot secure even a side street in Baghdad, not to mention provincial highways - Muqtada al-Sadr canceled his new Million Man March, which would have taken place this Thursday in Sunni-majority Samarra. He was forced to issue a communique discrediting rumors - black ops? - relayed by Sunni sheikhs according to which the Mahdi Army would conduct ethnic cleansing in Samarra and turn it into a 100% Shi'ite city.

Disregarding the occasional shriek by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki as ambient noise, the US military continues to invade Sadr City practically on a daily, pre-dawn basis in search of Iranian "terrorists", bombing houses and killing poor Shi'ite Iraqi civilians instead. This is the face of Bush's "surge" that doesn't feature in the Western press - but it does on Arab satellite channels.

Iraqis have every reason to fear words, as in the poem by Nazik al-Mala'ikah. Many remember the apocalyptic expressions "axis of evil" or "weapons of mass destruction". They've now been told - by the Mission Accomplisher-in-Chief - their country is the new Israel. An exiled history professor in Damascus may have come up with the only possible way out of the heart of darkness: "Maybe we should abandon Islam, convert to Judaism, and start doing business with Texas."

**Pepe Escobar** is the author of [Globalistan: How the Globalized World is Dissolving into Liquid War](#) (Nimble Books, 2007). He may be reached at [pepeasia@yahoo.com](mailto:pepeasia@yahoo.com).

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