

# MILITARY RULE IS THE SOLUTION IN IRAQ

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In cases of military intervention in politics, the military establishment in third-world countries has played two kinds of roles. The first is a negative role of delaying the natural process of democratization by resorting to force or the threat of force to control power. It was this practice that opened the door for coups and counter coups by aspiring army officers.

The second role was more positive. In cases where the failure of politicians and the corruption of the ruling elite led to widespread chaos and political instability, putting states on the brink of civil war, the military acted as a protector of the integrity of the state by serving as an institution not consumed by internal power struggles and fragmentation. The military would, as a result, step in to prevent instability and ensure the continued wellbeing of the people. Cases in point include Turkey and Pakistan, and more recently Mauritania. In these and other instances, the military protected democracy and safeguarded the constitution and basic civil rights against violations by ruling elites.

In most cases, the military establishment in the developing world is a microcosm of the national identity of a nation in question. It is the melting pot for all forms of sub-national affiliations. It is also characterized by discipline and better organization in comparison with other state institutions, a trait that makes the military more capable of decisive intervention at the right moments. In times of crises, its role has been quite effective in consolidating the sense of national belonging and reducing the side-effects of emergencies.

At the same time, a positive role during a crisis can only be played by a strong national military establishment, one which is capable of taking a proactive measure to save a country from the horrible consequences of civil war and fragmentation. It is this role that the army must play in Iraq.

Iraq is on the verge of a complete breakdown. After four years of internal power struggles and illegal occupation, the question is whether the state can remain intact or whether it will wither away. During this period, Iraq has experienced sectarian violence, the daily humiliation of Iraqi citizens by occupation forces, and the mass killing of civilians by terrorist groups, warring militias, and criminal gangs.

One fundamental reason for the current situation inside Iraq is the failure of Iraqi politicians to deliver on both their mandate and promises. Their inaction has allowed sectarian divisions to deepen, institutionalized widespread corruption, and left the state's institutions in a shambles. The result is that partisan and sectarian allegiances are deepening and the patriotic sense of belonging is waning. Flowery promises of democracy and economic wellbeing are being shown up as fantasies in the midst of bloodshed, human right violations, and the forced displacement of populations. Iraqi politicians had the chance to prove their ability to rule the country in an effective manner, but they failed.

Iraq today needs a strong military establishment to rid the average citizen of the humiliation by outside forces. More importantly, the military needs to provide a viable alternative for the failures and malpractices of the political leadership. Here it should be noted that the Iraqi Army was established by Great Britain in January 1921 — seven months before the accession of the royal family in Iraq — and that the first command and staff college in the Arab world was established by the Iraqi Army in the 1940s.

The current problem is that while the occupation authorities disbanded the Iraqi Army, which paved the way for the current malaise, various groups now have a vested interest in maintaining the current situation. They include members of the ruling elite who lack legitimacy, armed militias that could exist only in the absence of a strong national army and central authority, and terrorist groups filling the vacuum left by the army. Even foreign powers want to prevent the existence of a strong army because it would restrict their influence in the domestic affairs of the country. In all these instances, the biggest losers are the people of Iraq.

In the absence of strong national Iraqi armed forces, the situation will remain open to all possible negative scenarios — chief among them the fragmentation and ultimate breakdown of the Iraqi state. If this were to occur, the consensus is that this would have catastrophic repercussions not only in Iraq, but also in the Middle East as a whole. So, the question that requires an answer is: What could enforce law and order in Iraq, bring stability, assist in nation-building, re-establish a powerful state and save the country from the current tragedy? No obvious answers come to mind other than a strong national army.

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