

*Buchbesprechungen*

Cooley, John K.: *An Alliance against Babylon. The U. S., Israel, and Iraq. Forword by William R. Polk. Pluto Press, London 2005. 258 pp. ISBN 0-7453-2282-4*

Khalidi, Rashid: *Resurrecting Empire. Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East. I. B. Tauris, London 2004. 224 pp. ISBN 1-85043-903-6*

The Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani called the Palestinian children who fought at the forefront against the Israeli occupation "children of stone". He applauded them for their courage and advised them to ignore their moth-eaten leaders who have always deceived them. One year before his death, in 1998, he wrote a political poem "I am for terrorism". There he labelled all those "terrorists" who stigmatised all those who tried to justify occupation and tyranny in the name of terrorism. For him, terrorism is a word, which the oppressor uses to defame the national struggle for liberation. This holds true for Palestine and Iraq. Tariq Ali, the famous Pakistani born writer who lives in London, wrote in his book "Bush in Babylon" that US-President Bill Clinton was the first who implemented the neo-colonial policy in the

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Balkans. Under George W. Bush "this aggressive agenda is now in force." The sole "hyperpower" is waging war against a thousand times weaker enemy. But the "mission is (not) accomplished" like Bush praised it way in advance. Over 2250 Americans have already died and over 16 000 were severely wounded and crippled forever. Just for a deluded neo-conservative ideology.

John K. Cooley, a former correspondent for ABC News and the Christian Science Monitor, argues that America's new invasion and occupation of Iraq marks a turning point in the relationship of the west with the Arab world. The crucial factor for the author is the connection between Israel and the United States. At the onset the relation between both nations was contradictory but in the course of history, especially after the Six-Day-War in June 1967 their interest started to coincide. Was the US-war against Iraq in fact a proxy war? Middle-Eastern correspondents like Robert Fisk asked these questions. Cooley covers a wide range of historical questions, from biblical Babylonian times until now.

The author has written books like Baal, Christ and Mohammed: Religion and Revolution in North Africa; Payback: America's long war in the Middle East; Unholy Wars; and others. He belongs to the very few who have written about the true involvement of the United States with the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. The US supported him in the fight against the former Soviet Union. They had already agreed with the Taliban about the building of the oil-pipeline from the Caspian Region through Afghanistan until the Taliban regarded their loyalty to bin Laden higher than the interest of their country.

In eleven most interesting chapters Cooley describes the history of Iraq from Babylonian times over the Ottoman heritage to the evacuation of the Iraqi Jews to Israel till the regime of Saddam Hussein and his overthrow from power through the American lead war. The author shows that Israel had always a great interest in getting Saddam off the scene. But the main ag-

gression against Saddam came from the US itself. US-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright took the lead against Iraq. In March 1997 at Georgetown University she delivered a broadside at Saddam for his dismal record on human rights, UN arms inspections, embargo invasions, and failure to return assets looted during his occupation of Kuwait. She declared that "the scorpion that bit us once to bite us again". The US would hold Saddam to account "as long as it takes" to force him to comply. She even hinted at "regime change" by declaring that Iraq could count on Western help once a "successor regime" had been installed.

A major role in creating the mood to invade Iraq played the intelligence community. Cooley shows that the Israelis were at the forefront in advising the US

"Israel's actual role in Iraq, though it rarely made headlines, was manifold: war testing of jointly-developed weapons; Israeli classroom and field training of U.S. Special Forces in the same rough tactics that the IDF has been using for years to keep the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza subdued, and in the parallel task of fighting terrorism; solid support on the propaganda and spy-war fronts (as reflected in Israeli media, especially the foreign-language news broadcasts of Israel Radio)."

Especially the intelligence report were exaggerated and mostly false. And

"Israeli intelligence and covert military forces appear to have returned to Iraqi Kurdistan".

Even more revealing is Rashid Khalidi's book. He paints a chilling scenario of the present situation. Bush Iraq policy is doomed to fail, so Khalidi. The author shows the ignorance of the neoconservative ruling class, their disdain for international law and their brutal power-politic. For Khalidi, who is director of the Middle East Institute at Columbia University and holds the Edward Said Chair in Arab Studies there, the war against Iraq was fought for the following reasons: to free itself from interna-

tional law and from international opinion and from UN approval; to establish an American military base in the heart of the Arab world; to destroy the last nationalistic regime which defied the U. S. And its ally Israel; to reshape Iraq according to free-market ideology and to get hold of the country second-largest oil reserves. Khalidi shows the hybrids of the

“tone-deaf ahistorian and arrogant know-nothingism who decided on the war in the White House and controlled the military occupation from their offices in the Pentagon”.

The total ignorance and misunderstanding of international law shows the Undersecretary for Policy in the Pentagon, Douglas Faith, when he describes the First Geneva Convention as “law in the service of terrorism”.

This book provides a historical and cultural perspective to understanding the US dangerous situation in Iraq. Khalidi shows also a way out: to get rid of all the false advisers like Perle, Bolton, Faith, Wolfowitz, Wurmser and all the others who dragged the US into this war. There recommendations were not in the interest of United States. The author cites the report “Clean Break” which Perle wrote in 1996 for Israel’s Prime minister Benyamin Netanyahu in which he proposed an aggressive and rejectionist strategy against the Arab countries and the peace process. They represented the hard-line Likud world-view. These neocon “Sharonistas” shared Israel’s claustrophobic world-view that the whole world was full of terrorists and against the US. The author shows who this set of mind can obscure a rational judgement.

“This pattern of blind zealotry overriding expertise was clearly apparent in the approach of the Bush administration in the build-up to the 2003 Iraq war.”

Georges Clemenceau wrote on March 8, 1918:

“My home policy? I wage war. My foreign policy? I wage war. Always, everywhere, I wage war ... And I shall con-

tinue to wage war until the very last moment.”

Could this not also be true for George W. Bush’s policy? The price for an empire will not be easy and cheap. The American people should decide quickly whether they want to pay this price in lives, material resources, and morally. Both books describe a reality which is not read about in Germany.

*Ludwig Watzal*