

Fundamental Contradictions within the 'Peace Movement'

The movement in solidarity with Iraq and against the sanctions clearly enters another phase. I want to use this opportunity to point out some fundamental contradictions within our movement.

The Iraqi people and leadership are resisting re-colonization for more than 12 years. They didn't ever get the support they deserved from us. It is time to unconditionally stand with Iraq and against the U.S. in the upcoming confrontation.

Far from being able to end or at least weaken the attack against Iraq we even failed to develop and maintain a clear posture in support of Iraq. The latter can't be attributed to outside forces because we are solely responsible for our own positions and understanding.

Important to Notice

The demonization of an individual, or a group of people, is a popular and cheap means used by propagandists to unite the own population against another peoples, and get thier support for attacking them. Demonization is a means of propaganda which has the psychological effect of de-humanizing the victims. The same propaganda effect was recently being achieved by accusing the attacked of 'crimes against humanity' (e.g. 'ethnic cleansing', 'concentration camp', 'suicide bomber' or 'terrorist').

Instead of rejecting any demonization as such, many of us choose to accept the basic theme of the demonization campaign (Saddam is a bad guy) and instead concentrated on the aspect of collective punishment (the Iraqi people are not Saddam). This approach can only fail because it doesn't challenge, and even re-affirms, the main propaganda theme with it's psychological effects: "Yes, we are all against Saddam and would like to see him removed, but we differ about the means what to do against him."

For us not living in Iraq, there is no reason to ever join the refrain. The Iraqi presidency and government should be respected and treated like any other government. We have nothing to judge about the governments of other countries. Instead of opposing any demonized government of another country we better care about fighting the government where we live.

By generally accepting the legitimacy of interventions in the internal affairs of other countries or regions, we find ourselves in the desparate position to always find some good side in a conflict in order to whole-heartedly support the attacked. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was strictly a regional affair and didn't threaten anyone outside that region. U.S. and other imperialists out of everywhere!

We find the same line of argumentation with regards to the involuntary weapons control regime against Iraq. "Yes, we are also against Iraq's sovereignty to acquire whatever weapons they decide." Support among 'peace activists' for measures to prevent the proliferation of atomic and chemical weapons, and medium or long range missiles, is strong.

Instead of concentrating our fight to abolish the strategic arsenals of the Great Powers, and stop there assaults and interventions against weaker countries, we choose to help defend the monopoly of a few to have certain weapons. It seams obvious, and is surely reasonable, that a few nuclear weapons on medium range ballistic missiles

give a defending country some credible threat of retaliation and therefore deterrence of potential aggressors with far superior forces. The Great Powers are against the proliferation of missiles and AC weapons because they don't want to be deterred from their aggressions in any significant way.

The whole talk about 'economic and military sanctions' was a big mistake. By splitting the sanctions issue we at least implicitly admitted that there might be some legitimate part of the sanctions.

By accepting the core propaganda myths of the aggressors (Saddam is bad and Iraq must not have WMD) we put ourselves into a desperate situation. By accepting the frame of discourse set up by the propagandists we not only limit our argumentation mostly to humanitarian issues (more than 2 million Iraqis killed by war and sanctions) but may indeed help the propagandists by adding credibility to their core themes (even peace and anti-sanctions activists are against Saddam and for weapons controls against Iraq).

We shouldn't accept the term Weapons of Mass Destruction, because it is inaccurate and misleading. Chemical or biological weapons are no mass destruction weapon. The Nazis used poison gas among other means in their mass extermination campaign. But it was not the means which allowed or executed the mass extermination or determined the number of people killed. Both chemical and biological weapons can be used in many different ways, among them the killing of many people. But the millions killed in recent years in Rwanda and Kongo reminded us that any low tech weapon can still be used for the same purpose. Missiles are by itself not even necessarily a weapon, but can be used for civil purposes as well (e.g. launch of satellites). The only weapon technology which so far is clearly a mass destruction weapon are nuclear bombs. And as such they proved generally more useful for deterrence than for attacks. Moreover, there is no reason to lump these completely different weapons categories together. The only reason to do so is for a few countries try to maintain their monopoly of certain weapons or at least control the process of proliferation.

There is no such thing like a good or bad weapon. The Iran-Iraq war was terrible and destructive. Estimates are, that more than a million people died during the war, and many more were handicapped or in prison camps. Mass extermination and human suffering of large proportions. Chemical weapons caused only a small share of the total destructive effects and deaths. A chemical weapons capability is just a means of warfare. War is the problem, not particular weapons.

Halabja was made into the most mentioned battle of that war in the Western media. Not because it was one the most deadly or important battles of the war, but taken out of context was reduced into "Saddam gassed it's own people".

Iraq is one of the very obvious cases of mass extermination and destabilization organized and executed by and under the UN. But still some of us don't get the idea, that the UN, in concert with the IMF / WB / WTO, are just another means of domination and intervention, each in it's sphere of responsibility. The UN sanctions against Iraq are an effort to impose a colonial rule upon Iraq. The resistance of Iraq in particular, and against the sanctions in general, can only be fully understood within the broader context of the fight against re-colonization. The current moves towards occupation and imposition of a puppet regime in Iraq are an implicit acknowledgement of the U.S. that the sanctions failed to achieve the goal of breaking Iraq's political independence.

Stand with Iraq against the UN/US

The simple and easy demand, to unconditionally and immediately restore the full sovereignty of Iraq, and revoke the UNSCRs punishing Iraq, was not acceptable for most in the anti-sanctions and even more the peace movement. We saw many of the anti-sanctions movement arguing to end the 'economic sanctions', while they were not really against 'military sanctions'. Worse, we saw many openly supporting the involuntary weapons control regime imposed upon Iraq. We never made the step to refrain from anti-Saddam and anti-WMD talk. Instead of developing our own discourse, many were repeating, and with that reaffirming, the main war propaganda. Some even went so far as to support and put their hope into the UN.

Abbreviations:

IMF: International Monetary Fund

UNSCR: United Nations Security Council Resolution
Documents of lies and shame.

WB: World Bank

WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction

Misleading propaganda term to stigmatize certain weapons categories the dominant world powers want to have under tight control.

WTO: World Trade Organization