

Comment: The Arab Crisis

Author: [Walid Khadduri](#)

Arabs want and need change, but not imposed from Washington with its own political agenda.

Events in the Arab world have moved into the realm of the incredible, crossing all the red lines that the Arabs drew for themselves in the past.

The most recent example: Facing the prospect of the occupation of Iraq and the resulting, inevitable damage to Arab interests, Arabs have been regaled with the spectacle of Arab leaders meeting to discuss the crisis and descending to an exchange of insults among themselves.

Today it is clear to the Arab public that their governments are unable to provide the most basic conditions of national security, unable even to protect the independence and sovereignty of their own countries. One reason for this impotence is the loss of trust between rulers and ruled, the total contempt shown for citizens' rights and human rights as set down in constitutions, international covenants and accords. Then, too, there are the complicating factors of corruption, economic weakness and the total lack of inter-Arab cooperation.

Arab states and people alike have lost self-respect - and the world has lost respect for them.

Adding to the gravity of the situation, it is clear that the US administration has had, for some time, a clear road map for a major campaign against Arab states in the region. While the first signs of this were apparent before 11 September, the political ingredients needed for it to be acted upon multiplied after that.

The aim is to topple a number of the regimes in the region and change the policies and attitudes of some of the others. This campaign is being made possible both by the enormous clout of the US on the international stage and the debilitating cancer that is spreading through the Arab world.

The main goals of this policy are, first, to boost US influence in the Middle East and, second, to change the regimes in the region. The aim of this change is not to bring them into the US orbit - because they are already there. Rather the goal is to change their nature, structure, laws, and political, economic and social cultures to make them conform to the demands of the neo-conservatives in the US administration.

These conditions, attractive at first sight, will demand living with Israel in line with the conditions of the Zionist right wing. They will be, or even more importantly they will be seen to be, imposed from the outside, in coordination with a hard-line Israeli agenda.

What are these developments going to mean for Arabs? First of all, the imminent occupation of an Arab state - a catastrophe comparable in scale to that which occurred in Palestine in 1948. The tragedy this time is that the occupation is being carried out by the most powerful state in the world in partnership with other states with a variety of claims and aspirations in the Arab world. Despite the welter of explanations relating to the nature of the forthcoming foreign occupation in Iraq, there will be only one outcome: military rule.

From that moment on, the operative words will be resistance to foreign occupation, with all that this implies.

This means a long period of unrest and turmoil stretching forward a decade or more. We will witness the appearance of political movements that are completely different from the ones we have known in the past. Some will advocate secularism, others religious extremism or ultra-nationalism. Others will cooperate voluntarily with the new foreign initiative.

It is vital, then, that contemporary Arab political forces unite to bring large segments of the public together to achieve an Arab civil and democratic society in which all people feel they enjoy dignity and equality of citizenship.

Finally, the problem that is perhaps the most difficult to solve: dealing with our own governments in the region. It is clear that there is a gap that cannot be bridged between the public and the regimes. There is no mutual trust and no intention to change on the part of governments that deal with the symptoms of the problem but leave the causes to get worse.

This was possible in the past. But not today. Now, there is impending occupation and with Arab citizens losing all semblance of dignity, in the region and elsewhere. Now, exile is the only way to build a decent life. War will thus only cause an already bad situation to deteriorate - if such a thing is possible.

Two challenges will face post-Saddam Iraq and the wider region: to check foreign hegemony, and to carry out internal reform and promote democratic regimes and constitutional institutions. Failing this, some young people will resort to acts of terrorism and anarchy, exacerbating the tragic situation that faces us today.

Walid Khadduri, an Iraqi journalist, is editor-in-chief of the Middle East Economic Survey.

Location: [Middle East](#)
[Palestine](#)
[Israel](#)
[Syria](#)

Focus: [Iraq](#)

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/comment-arab-crisis>