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War in Iraq:

Reap the Whirlwind

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“We have to liberate ourselves from the idea that we caused this,” says Tony Blair, former British Prime Minister, referring to the present disaster in Iraq. The first question this raises is why anyone would ask for Tony Blair’s opinion on anything. George W. Bush, at least, seems smart enough to hide out in a bramble patch on his ranch and say nothing.

Of course, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 with Britain’s support “caused this” – by creating the al-Qaeda outfit now called ISIS, by setting in motion intercommunal warfare that wiped out most mixed Sunni-Shia neighborhoods, by ultimately replacing the horrific Saddam Hussein dictatorship with the sectarian, corrupt and bumbling regime of Nouri al-Maliki.

What next ? Despite frantic media headlines, ISIS will not capture Baghdad or Shia strongholds, and Kurdish forces will halt its expansion in the north. How long ISIS rules the Sunni heartlands depends mainly on how long the population tolerates its terrorist cruelty. Its savage massacres of captured soldiers, as well as Shia civilians, are clearly intended to provoke reprisal killings and force a Sunni-Shia civil war that the vast majority of Iraqis don’t want.

Whether Iraq survives as a country is harder to predict, and in any case effectively out of U.S. hands now. If there’s one thing that can make the crisis even worse, and increase the chances of Iraq’s disintegration, it’s a new U.S. military intervention. Bombing Iraq would show that Washington has learned nothing from its war that “caused this.” We’ve already reaped the whirlwind – don’t let it happen again.

June 18, 2014

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