

# IMAGES OF IRAQ

## Dr. Amaal V.E. Tokars

AMERICAN CITIZENS RECEIVE many images about the war/occupation in Iraq on a daily basis. These images are presented to citizens through various mediums in print, radio, and in television. These mediums are kinds of text which bombard listeners, readers, and viewers with images about the application of U.S. policy abroad. Textual imagery refers to the images established through text which has yet to be critically examined for real accuracy and authenticity. Here are a few examples of textual imagery.

Americans have received several images of a massive al-Qaida terror network based in Falluja, Iraq. However, this network was more likely to be about the Shia defending their city than a result of the masterminding of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi on behalf of al-Qaida. While it is true that al-Qaida have been permitted to enter Iraq since the United States opened Iraq's borders, it is not accurate to describe the violence in Iraq a brought on by Iraq's relationship with al-Qaida. This relationship; which began only after the U.S. invasion of Iraq is but one of several unhealthy elements present as a result of the instability associated with the 13 yr. U.S. embargo followed by the devastation of invasion and occupation.

There have also been images in the form of rhetoric about the U.S. preemptive strike on Iraq as being new territory for U.S. policy in the Middle East. This is also not accurate. In 1951, Iran's Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh moved to nationalize the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company which was controlled by the British. In response, the British turned to the U.S.

to alter this situation. A CIA inspired coup overthrew the legitimate government of Iran and put in place Mohammed Reza Shah in its stead. This was certainly a pre-emptive, although covert strike.

This U.S. citizenry has received repeated recent images about the potential for civil war in Iraq. The use of the term civil war is misleading in that it implies two sides at odds in Iraq. When a region or nations tries to move forward with a collapsed infrastructure, many factions are created and all peoples are at risk of civil violence as a result. In October, a suicide bombing in the small city of Tal Afar is ironic in that the Administration has touted this area as a relative success. This provincial area may be contested between the Kurd and the Sunni, but is also now very dangerous for non-Muslims or anyone one else who stands out as different. This pattern of conflict does not bear the markings of a civil war, rather it bears the markings of the death of civil society. The effects of this will be much more violent and much longer lasting than the effects of civil war.

Then there has been the relentless imaging that things are going better in Iraq. Such images have been commonplace and confusing. Maj. Gen. Joseph Peterson; Commander, Civilian Police Assistance Training Team in Iraq recently stated this about Iraqi security forces, " 'If you put together this equation where we have a more functional ministry that is capable and then capable forces that we are continuing to grow, continuing to mentor, teach, and coach down in their police stations,' he said. 'And I see great progress. And I believe you should be optimistic about that.' " This was said at a recent Baghdad press conference in which the

American Forces Press Service was apparently in the audience and in turn prepared an article of the like. At a time when the brother of Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashime has just been murdered perhaps we should consider instead the recent caution of Colin Powell, "Stay the course isn't a good enough answer, because to stay the course you have to have a finish line."

These aforementioned instances are manifestations of maxims or images that are reproduced and presented again and again to American citizens. They rest upon a solid foundation of textual imagery that has already been produced about this part of the world. It is critical that citizens are given accurate and authentic information as it related to U.S. policy abroad.

"These maxims will not be shaken, they will not be called into question without first bringing a critical deciphering to the text through which these images are being produced (Seduced by Fear, 2007)."

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Amaal Tokars holds a doctoral degree in Education and Anthropology. She has spent her professional career working in the diverse arena of human services and is the author of the upcoming book: *America & Iraq: Seduced by Fear*, a well-researched analysis related to leadership and policy and cultural competence. Dr. Tokars holds citizenship in Canada, Iraqi, and United States which gives her a powerful perspective few can have. Currently she resides in the Chicago area with her family. Her hope is that her work promotes dialogue on the meaning of citizenship in our global society and that all citizens will be a valued voice in the shaping of our lived history. Press kit can be obtained by media at <http://www.seducedbyfear.com/>