

not intend to withdraw fully), is that a government which is formed under occupation cannot be independent.

US/UK OUT: UN IN

Therefore, if the anti-war movement is to pay heed to the expressed wishes of the Iraqi people (as determined in several polls), we should abandon the demand for 'troops out now' and call instead for the rapid replacement of US/UK occupation forces, and the withdrawal of US/UK political and economic 'advisers'.

THE UN OPTION

JNV believes there should be a UN transitional administration in Iraq to support Iraqi political parties in transforming their society. In straw polls carried out in dozens of anti-war meetings across England, Wales and Scotland last autumn, this had majority support in all but one of the meetings.

Admittedly, the UN option is not popular in Iraq: only 0.6% of people think they should be involved in regaining security; and only 3.5% think they should be involved in helping Iraqis regain control over their country; and only 6% think they should be involved in holding national elections - but the Iraqi Governing Council only gets the support of 8.7% of people, the US 5.3% and the CPA only 0.3%!

But if people in Iraq were presented with the choice between a US/UK occupation, a UN transitional authority free from US domination, or simple US/UK withdrawal, it is hard to believe they would not opt for the UN in those circumstances, given the poll results on withdrawal and security.

Finally, needless to say, BBC/mainstream reports of the ORI poll did not highlight massive Iraqi opposition to the occupation, focusing on the fact that most Iraqi people feel the situation is going to improve over the next year (eg 'Survey finds hope in occupied Iraq', BBC News Online, 16 Mar.; Simon Tisdall, *Guardian*, 19 Mar.).

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HOW IRAQ FEELS ABOUT THE OCCUPATION

The Second National Opinion Poll in Iraq JNV Anti-War Briefing 56 (19 March 2004)

IRAQ REJECTS THE OCCUPATION

The majority of Iraqi people oppose the presence of US/UK occupation forces in their country and do not believe that the US and UK should be involved in restoring public security or holding elections in Iraq. So says the second nationwide opinion poll carried out since the war, a poll commissioned by the BBC and carried out in February 2004 by 'Oxford Research International'. (Full results of the poll are available in pdf format from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3514504.stm>.)

51.2% of Iraqis oppose the presence of the US/UK occupation forces (31.3% strongly). Only 39.5% support them.

66.3% of people do not have confidence in the US and UK occupation forces. Only 25.3% do have some confidence. **62.2% do not have confidence in the US/UK Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).** Only 27.9% have some confidence in the CPA.

Only 12.7% of Iraqis think the occupation Forces or the United States should be involved in regaining public security in Iraq. 49.5% think it should be an Iraqi government or the Iraqi people.

Only 7.4% of Iraqis think the occupation forces/the US should hold the elections for a new Iraqi national government. 8.7% think the Governing Council should do it. 23.9% think it should be the Iraqi people; 18.2% go for 'the Iraqi government'.

What kind of regime does Iraq need now? 31.6% opted for the CPA. **57.3% said Iraq did not need the CPA** (36.9 strongly).

IRAQIS SAY, 'US/UK TROOPS OUT... BUT NOT NOW'

Asked whether they supported or opposed the presence of US/UK occupation forces ('Coalition Forces') in Iraq, 31.3% strongly opposed and 19.6% somewhat opposed their presence. 26.3% somewhat supported and 13.2% strongly supported their presence. That's **50.2% opposing the occupation against 39.5% support.**

But, as we pointed out in *JNV Briefing 50*, there is a great deal of ambivalence in the Iraqi attitude to the US/UK forces. **The vast majority of the Iraqi people do not want immediate withdrawal.** Asked how long the occupation forces should stay, Iraqis gave these responses: 'leave now' (15.1%); 'a few months' (8.3%); 'six months to a year' (6.1%); 'more than one year' (4.3%). 18.3% said 'They should remain until security is restored'. The bulk of people, however, said, 'They should remain until an Iraqi government is in place' (35.8%). (Only 1.5% said, 'They should never leave', and 10.6% didn't know.)

Two opinion polls last summer also found that immediate withdrawal was favoured only by a minority of Iraqis. A poll in Baghdad for Channel 4 News, published in the *Spectator* on 19 July, found that **only 13% wanted the US and British troops to leave immediately.** As many as 76% want them to stay for the time being—56%, wanting them to remain for at least 12 months.

www.channel4.com/news/2003/07/week_3/16_poll.html

Then a US-conducted poll conducted outside Baghdad found that **only 31% of people polled in four Iraqi cities wanted US/UK troop withdrawal within the next six months.** But 65.5% of Iraqis demanded withdrawal within a year. (*FT*, 11 Sept., p. 11) This greater impatience might have been to do with the changing political situation, or because the poll was outside Baghdad.

It is hard to know whether there is greater impatience now than last summer because it is not clear from the latest opinion poll what is meant by 'until an Iraqi government is in place'. Does this mean an interim government, or does it mean a directly-elected government? On the US timetable, the interim government will be here at the end of June, and the directly-elected government by 31 Dec. 2005. Were the people responding to the poll ready to wait this long?

THE SECURITY PROBLEM

If the Iraqi people are so strongly opposed to the occupation, why would they support its retention? In *JNV Briefing 49* six months ago, we argued that 'the Iraqi people seem to want some outside military presence, for security reasons'. This still seems to be the reason.

Asked 'the single biggest problem' in their lives, the most popular answer (named by twice as many people as the next option) was '**lack of security/stability**' (22.1%). Next were 'no job' (11.8%) and 'rising prices' (9.5%). Then came 'poor electricity supply' (4.2%), 'housing problems' (4.1%), 'poor public services (water, roads, etc.)' (3.7%), and 'poor living standard' (3.8%). 'The occupation' was named by only 1.1% of people.

However, asked about the security situation in their own neighbourhood, while 50.1% said it was bad, 48.9% said it was good.

Nevertheless, asked what was the top priority for the next year, 64.4% of people said 'regaining public security', and no other option received more than 8.1% (holding elections for national government). Incidentally, the overwhelming second priority was economic: 'rebuilding the infrastructure' at 28.6%, then 'reviving the economy' at 14.7%. The top two choices for the third national priority were 'rebuilding the infrastructure (19.2%) and 'holding elections for national government' at 13.5%.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

So it seems that the reluctant acceptance of the occupation forces is based on the continuing fear of social chaos. Anecdotal reports in the mainstream media confirm this analysis.

Given that the anti-war movement wants to bring an end to the occupation as soon as possible, there are only two demands that could be made which would be consistent with Iraqi public opinion: establish an Iraqi government and then get the troops out; or get the troops out as soon as possible to be replaced by another international security force uncontaminated by Washington or London.

The problem with the first route, which is what the British and US governments would say is their actual policy (except that they do