Who Is the “Color Revolution” in Iraq Directed Against?

Since October of last year there have been ongoing mass demonstrations in Iraq, which have not yet subsided. As a result of clashes with law enforcement agencies, at least 600 protesters have died and over 16,000 have sustained injuries. Iraq’s President Barham Salih cited these statistics during his speech at the recently finished World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos (Switzerland).

As mentioned before, large-scale anti-government protests have been sweeping Baghdad and other large Iraqi cities since 1 October 2019. People have come out onto the streets demanding the resignation of the government and action against corruption and unemployment.

Throughout its history, Iraq has witnessed so much: tyranny and dictatorships, political repression and assassinations, periods of prosperity and stagnation, but it has never experienced such shameless budget theft as during the “new democratic regime”, installed by Washington. And the battle against this evil amounts to nothing more than loud meaningless statements. Dozens of high-ranking corrupt officials, including those at the ministerial level, have left the country and are now leading a “quiet” life, unafraid to show off their wealth, in Jordan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Great Britain, Turkey and other countries. We need only recall the first Minister of Defense of “independent” Iraq, Hazim al-Shaalan, who managed to embezzle more than $4 billion within only a year on the job and then left for the capital of Jordan. In Amman, he transformed from a thief into a “respectable” business man and built a huge shopping and recreational center there.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the rallying cry to fight budget theft and corruption has long become a convenient “fuel source” for igniting various political upheavals and mass protests in Iraq. The anti-corruption slogans have
been especially valuable to U.S. instigators of “color” revolutions in Iraq whenever it became necessary to shift the anger felt against the United States by the masses to Iranian policies and thieves of the Iraqi state budget.

Instability in this already seething region has for some time now stemmed from the consequences of the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the ongoing unlawful presence of foreign occupiers in this Middle Eastern nation. Since 1991, the United States has been warring with Iraq and staging one operation after another there in search of dictators who are subsequently executed, thus ruining the lives of millions of people and killing tens of thousands in the “name of freedom and democracy”. At the same time, Americans have been using Iraqi oil deposits for their own enrichment. They have even had the audacity to formally threaten to deprive Iraq of its proceeds from selling its own oil and to freeze the nation’s accounts in the Federal Reserve Bank of New York used to store money from oil sales.

By appointing Nouri al-Maliki as Prime Minister of Iraq earlier on, Washington probably hoped to ensure he would be completely “under their thumb”. However, after a while, the Iraqi leadership gradually stopped unquestioningly following orders from Washington. Nouri al-Maliki ended up creating a very unpleasant situation for Washington by showing his unwillingness to support Iraq’s “American friends”, and then began to pursue even tougher policies aimed at consolidating power in the hands of Shia Muslims. In August 2014, the United States provoked a wave of “color” revolutions in Iraq. By inciting a Sunni uprising and a battle against the Shia stranglehold, they managed to remove Nouri al-Maliki from power, who had been the Prime Minister of Iraq for many years (since 2006). In the meantime, Daesh, a terrorist group banned in Russia, promptly took advantage of the unrest and initiated a bloody war in the Levant.

Several months before the savage assassination of Major General Qasem Soleimani, the Trump administration, which had imposed economic sanctions against Iran, had attempted to pressure the Iraqi leadership to stop purchasing gas and electricity from Iran. However, these efforts have met with considerable resistance from Iraqi government officials who understand that a deterioration in cooperation with Iran may cause a serious rise in tensions in Iraqi society. After all, following the 1991 Operation Desert Storm during which U.S. servicemen repeatedly attacked and caused damage to Iraq’s electricity grid, Baghdad made an effort to ensure there was sufficient power to meet the domestic demand. In May 2018, residents of several districts of Baghdad had only 3-hours worth of electricity per day. At the time, the lack of power had already resulted in mass anti-government protests, which continued into year 2019.

And in order to strengthen the electricity grid, the Iraqi leadership asked Iran for help. In 2017, Iraqi government officials signed a long-term natural gas supply agreement with Iran, which, at present, is one of the key elements in Iran-Iraq cooperation, which is something Washington simply abhors.

Then the United States needed yet another wave of “color” revolutions with the view that increased protests in October 2019 could “bring the Iraqi government to their senses”. One of the consequences of this unrest was the November arson attack on the building housing the Consulate General of Iran in the Iraqi city of Najaf, in the south of the country.

After the assassination of Qasem Soleimani and the escalation in the intensity of demonstrations against U.S. policies as well as the decision taken by the Iraqi government to expel American troops from their nation, sponsors of “color” revolutions from across the pond instigated yet another wave protests. Nonetheless, the anti-American demonstrations have not abated and continued with renewed intensity in Baghdad and the Green Zone, a heavily fortified (as required in times of war) part of the capital where the U.S. Embassy is situated. Protesters armed with Molotov cocktails climbed the walls of the embassy and tried to storm its main gates. According to reports published by Al-Monitor, some of the demonstrators wrote slogans extolling Irani Major General Qasem Soleimani on the walls of the U.S. Embassy.

So the United States has no other choice but to do something about all of this. Americans can either continue to try and pressure the Iraqi leadership or replace obstinate politicians with someone else. Both options are far from a perfect solution. And considering the fact that the current Iraqi government appears to be incapable of resolving the situation to Washington’s satisfaction, we can expect a growing tide of “color” revolutions in Iraq. However, this unrest can turn into an open anti-American revolt in the nearest future, and, therefore, the “color” revolutions incited by Washington may end up targeting its instigators, ushering in a new era of “revolutionary achievements”.

Vladimir Platov, Middle East expert, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.
