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The main effect of all that ink-stained finger-waving and bathos, it seems, is to guarantee the legacy of Paul Bremer, and to rubber-stamp his neoliberal agenda for the near term.

MILAN RAI, ELECTRONIC IRAQ (via Progressive Review, February 16):

> One US device is the Transitional Administrative Law, an interim constitution written in Washington and imposed on Iraq in March 2004.
>
> Jawad al-Maliki, member of Daawa, one of the two main Shia parties, has pointed out correctly that ‘the body which we have elected has more legitimacy than this document.’ Unfortunately, the TAL is self-defined as the default constitution of Iraq until a permanent constitution has been adopted in a referendum.
>
> In a clause bitterly rejected by the Shia majority parties, the TAL states that the permanent constitution must obtain the approval of at least one-third of the voters in sixteen of Iraq’s eighteen provinces. This was

> put in to give Kurdish provinces a veto over the final text… If this veto is used by the Kurds, the TAL continues to be the constitution. (And, according to Article 59 of the TAL, the Iraqi military will continue to function under US command.)

Equally important, it's worth mentioning again, is a couple of other key provisions of the TAL: the intellectual property agreements signed under Bremer and the "privatization" (corporate looting) of state assets.

> The effect of these provisions of the Transitional Administrative Law is to give Washington's most loyal clients in Iraq — the Kurds — a powerful veto over political progress.
>
> Another device for US control is the debt relief plan put together in November 2004, under which some of Iraq's creditor nations will forgive some of Iraq's debt (in stages), conditional upon the Iraqi government following an IMF 'liberalization' program. This program will prioritize foreign investors, privatization, and 'tax reform', but not unemployment or poverty in Iraq…

Translated from neoliberal-speak into English, of course, that means further massive looting of state assets, embodying the sweat equity of Iraqi taxpayers, by politically connected insiders. If a slightly less whipped government were in power, it might do what Sean Corrigan recommends:

> …much less "forgiveness," no self-respecting libertarian would cavil at a free people wholly repudiating any debts contracted in their name by the members of their former political elites, especially where this was done with the less-than-disinterested connivance of alien powers, themselves pursuing either cynical Realpolitik or "Open Door" corporatist vote-buying (most likely, both).

The *Electronic Iraq* article continues:

> Another device for maintaining control was Paul Bremer's appointment of key officials for five year terms just before leaving office. In June 2004, the US governor ordered that the national security adviser and the national intelligence chief chosen by the US-imposed interim prime minister, Iyad Allawi, be given five-year terms, imposing Allawi's choices on the elected government. Bremer also installed inspectors-general for five-year terms in every ministry, and formed and filled commissions to regulate communications, public broadcasting and securities markets.

Once again, as has been the case with assorted other velvet and orange revolutions, along with sundry exercises in "people power," what's left after the smoke clears is a neoconservative counterfeit democracy. What the neocons call "democracy" is a Hamiltonian system in which the people exercise formal power to elect the government, but the key directions of policy are determined by a small and relatively stable Power Elite that is insulated from any real public pressure.