

USADI Dispatch

A publication of the U.S. Alliance for Democratic Iran

Volume 1, No. 49

Thursday, October 7, 2004

USADI Commentary

Freedom: Antithesis to Tehran's Fundamentalism

The menace of Islamic fundamentalism, which kills, bombs, maims, sows horror and vengeance, has only one antithesis: freedom and democracy. Thus, a meaningful war on terror hinges on the expansion of secular democracies and support for indigenous anti-fundamentalist, democratic forces who are working toward such a goal.

Since 1979, the ayatollahs' Iran has emerged as the heartland of Islamic fundamentalism and terror, and it is where it must first be defeated, a noble goal that Iran's democracy movement is bent on accomplishing.

The totalitarian nature of the Iranian regime, which thrives on suppression and export of terror, renders it incapable of change. To survive, it kills the thirst for freedom and instills terror. It also exports its brand of fundamentalism and terrorism beyond its borders to conceal its intrinsic inability to resolve problems at home. Thus, it cannot cease this export as long as it rules.

Under such slogans as "liberating Jerusalem via Karbala," the mullahs have worked to export "Islamic Revolution" throughout the region and Iraq. The emergence of Shiite fundamentalism in Iraq is not an inherently "Iraqi" phenomenon. It is made in Iran. Iraqi Shiites, like their Sunni and Kurdish brothers and sisters, aspire for democracy and freedom.

Iran's mullahs, who wrote the book on how to hijack a nation's long-denied aspirations for popular governance, have now put their know-how into practice in Iraq to create an offshoot theocracy. To this end, they have mounted an increasingly sophisticated and multi-faceted campaign in Iraq.

At the same time, Iran is busy recruiting thousands of volunteers for suicide attacks against the US-led coalition forces in Iraq. Last summer, Iran's official media quoted a top Revolutionary Guards official as saying, "We have identified some 29 weak points for attacks in the U.S. and in the West."

Meanwhile, Tehran is on a crash course to reach the nuclear point of no return in its efforts to develop a nuclear arsenal. Having a nuclear weapon is at the heart of Iran's doctrine of political and military hegemony and strategic survival in the region.

Stability in the Persian Gulf region would be seriously undermined if the Iranians succeed in acquiring the A-bomb. The specter of a nuclear-armed Iran – the most active state sponsor of terrorism – is far too ominous to let Tehran's appeasers in the European Union and apologists in Washington to dictate our nuclear policy.

Despite its repeated failure, engagement diehards continue to speak of the need to strike a bargain with Tehran. This runs counter to the interests of the Iranian people and the United States. Engagement, and all of its aliases such as "grand bargain" and "direct dialogue," must therefore be thrown out the door.

Iran's nuclear threat and its sponsorship of terror could be halted only through a regime change policy, not by direct military intervention but by throwing our diplomatic and political weight behind Iranians as they endeavor to oust the regime in Tehran. By reaching out to Iranian dissident forces, we can strike a better balance of power between the regime and its opposition.

Our blacklisting of Iranian opposition groups, prompted by the Clinton administration's desire to mollify Tehran, has hampered Iran's democracy movement and limited our ability to reach out to the democratic opposition groups in Iran. In line with the call by many veteran US policy experts, the U.S. can help its own cause by removing Iran's main opposition group, the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (MEK), from the list of foreign terrorist groups. There are sufficient political and legal grounds to do so.

The United States has recognized the status of Mujahedeen personnel as 'protected persons' under the Fourth Geneva Convention. This determination was, according to the State Department's deputy spokesman, due to the fact that the group was not "belligerent" during the Iraq war.

According to *the New York Times*, following "a 16-month review" and "extensive interviews by officials of the State Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation" there was not "any basis to bring charges against any members of the group".

The *Times* also quoted US officials as saying that the Mujahedeen "is not known to have directed any terrorist acts toward the United States for 25 years" and that "members of the group signed an agreement rejecting violence and terrorism."

Never before in the history of US-Iran relations, have democracy in Iran and the security interests of the United States been so intertwined. We can achieve the former and safeguard the latter by ensuring that Iranians succeed in replacing the tyranny in Iran with a democratic, secular state. Time to act in now!

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

1201 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20004
Tel: 202-661-4675, Fax: 202-318-0402, E-mail: dispatch@usadيران.org

National Review Online

October 5, 2004

Iran, When?

Months before the liberation of Iraq I wrote that we were about to have our great national debate on the war against the terror masters, and it was going to be the wrong debate. Wrong because it was going to focus obsessively on Iraq, thereby making it impossible to raise the fundamental strategic issues. Alas, that forecast was correct, and we're still stuck in the strategic quagmire we created. Up to our throats. So let's try again to get it right... The terror masters could not possibly stand by and permit an easy triumph in Iraq, for that would seal their own doom. For them, the battle of Iraq was an existential conflict, the ultimate zero-sum game. If we won, they died. But, blinded by our obsession with Iraq, we did not see it. ...

Had we seen the war for what it was, we would not have started with Iraq, but with Iran, the mother of modern Islamic terrorism, the creator of Hezbollah, the ally of al Qaeda, the sponsor of Zarqawi, the longtime sponsor of Fatah, and the backbone of Hamas...

Moreover, the Islamic Republic was uniquely vulnerable to democratic revolution, for, by the mullahs' own accounting, no less than seventy percent of the Iranian people hated the clerical fascist regime in Tehran, and hundreds of thousands of young Iranians had shown a disposition to challenge their oppressors in the streets of the major cities. Had we supported them then and there, in the immediate aftermath of Afghanistan, when the entire region was swept by political tremors of great magnitude, the evil regime might well have fallen, thereby delivering an enormous blow to the jihadis all over the world. I do not think we would have needed a single bomb or a single bullet.

... Those who attended closed discussions with the Iraqi defense minister a week ago heard a long list of evidence and cries of outrage against the murderous mullahcracy next door, and even though the leaders of the West — sadly including some of our own — continue to pretend that diplomacy may yet settle things in the Middle East, they cannot possibly believe it. This is a fight to the finish, still a zero-sum game.

In the past week, the Iranian people have again taken to the streets in every major city in the country. The chatterers pay no heed, because there is only one zero-sum game that interests them, which is the election, and the election is about Iraq, or so they say. Except that it isn't, really. It's about the war. The real war, the regional war, the war they are waging against us even if we refuse to acknowledge it...

Excerpts from an article by Michael Ledeen, Resident Scholar in the Freedom Chair at the American Enterprise Institute.

National Post

October 07, 2004

Dragging A Neighbour Into Anarchy

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell recently told the International Herald Tribune that "Iran is providing support for the insurgency in Iraq." He added, however, that "the extent of its influence over insurgent forces is not clear."...

Theoretically, the Iranians should have little motive for supporting Iraq's guerrillas and terrorists. Iran is largely a nation of Shiite Muslims... The wisest course for Tehran, one would think, would be to permit a smooth transition of power following elections, and then extend influence through friendly Shiite intermediaries in Baghdad's new government...

Yet an overwhelming array of facts show Iran has embraced the opposite strategy. In September, Mr. (Iraq's Defence Minister, Hazem) Shaalan displayed an array of weapons with Iranian markings that had been captured from insurgents in Najaf... Dozens of Iranians captured during the clashes were shown on Iraqi television.

According to Iran's official press, there are currently more than 1,200 Iranians in custody in Iraq. Iraqi media has recently reported that a truckload containing 1,800 82 mm-mortar rounds, three mortar launchers, 250 Katyusha rockets and large quantities of explosives was seized in transit from Iran to Iraq. Iranian independent opposition sources say 4,000 Shiite clerics from Iran have been sent to Iraq since the fall of Saddam's regime. According to the same sources, thousands of Revolutionary Guards disguised as religious pilgrims have also been dispatched.

Why is Iran stirring up Iraq's guerrilla war when it might just as easily profit from a smooth transition to democracy? The answer lies in Iran's domestic affairs: If Iran, a dictatorship, were to permit a truly democratic political structure to take root next door, it would only provide encouragement to the millions of young Iranians who have been militating for similar reforms back home...

In the long run, promoting stability in Iraq will require democratization in Iran -- for Tehran's theocrats will never accept a democracy on their western border. Until that day, the United States and other Western nations should hold Tehran to account for the violence and chaos it is deliberately fomenting. It is bad enough that 70 million Iranians must live under tyranny. Iraq's population must not be allowed to suffer the same fate.

Excerpts from an article by Nooredin Abedian, a writer living in France, and a former university professor in Iran.