

USADIran Dispatch

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Commentary

Emerging Threat on the Horizon?

While terrorism may be foremost on most American's minds, our policy makers must stay focused on an emerging threat to the American economy. Some very dangerous alliances could be on the horizon in the Middle East. Iraq holds the 2nd largest crude oil reserves in the world. Iran holds the 2nd largest natural gas reserves. And since the war ended, the Iranian regime has been calling for Iraqis to "resist US occupation" and some Iraqis are listening. There are some signs friendships between Iran and Iraq are forming... and they are not in America's best interests.

A plausible and horrifying scenario, as warned by some observers, is the formation of a nearly homogenous Islamic Republic stretching across the petroleum rich region that would include both Iran and Iraq. Envision how this theocratic oligarchy, to say the least, could destabilize our economy at will.

Today, America imports more than half of the petroleum we use. To quantify the looming threat, according to the US Department of Energy, for every one million barrels per day (mbpd) of oil supply disrupted and not made up by other supplies world oil prices could increase by \$3-\$5 per barrel. Iran alone produces nearly 4 mbpd. Last summer we faced a price increase of \$0.25 per gallon at the pump due to a shortfall of 250,000 barrels per day.

Some have forecasted a rivalry between Karbala and Qom (the Islamic centers of Iraq and Iran) to dismiss the possibility of Iraq ever becoming a patron of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Karbala-Qom rivalry theory does not hold; particularly at a time the Iranian Regime is flooding the holy cities of Iraq with its agents disguised as pilgrims, relief workers, and Islamic preachers. Having a client republic in Iraq has always been at the core of Tehran's regional strategy and they won't give that up now. **(See USADIran Dispatch No. 3)**

If Iran and Iraq ever become an ideological-political axis, there is the likely threat, among others, that they will cooperate in OPEC to strangle the US economy. To this, add the very probable scenario of Iran possessing nuclear weapons in one to five years.

Our policy should be formulated to prevent Iran from securing a client state in Iraq. America and the world simply can't afford it.

Iranian cleric praises terrorists in Iraq

TEHRAN - Iraqis who attack U.S. troops are not terrorists, but defenders of their country, a member of a senior Iranian council said in remarks published Saturday.

"Individuals who use bombs against the United States are not terrorists because they are defending their lives and properties against the thieves (U.S. soldiers)," Ayatollah Ali Meshkini was quoted by the government newspaper Iran as saying.

Meshkini is a member of the Assembly of Experts. **(Associated Press, November 8, 2003)**

Beware Iranians Bearing Gifts

WASHINGTON -- The old saying, "Beware Greeks bearing gifts" should be updated to "Beware Iranians bearing gifts."...

The right (in Iran) continues to dominate key governmental structures, such as the Council of Guardians, the national economy, the armed forces, the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps, the judiciary, the basij militia, its own intelligence services outside the government, and hard-line vigilante groups used to beat up students demonstrating for a liberalized Iran.

It is the IRGC that enabled the guerrillas of Ansar al-Islam, a group of Iraqi Kurdish Islamists with ties to al-Qaida, to escape into Iran when Ansar came under joint U.S.-Iraqi Kurdish attack, then later allowed it to filter back into Iraq and resume its activities.

In the Shiite part of Iraq, Iran is indirectly supporting the would-be firebrand cleric, Moqtada al-Sadr. Last summer, he went to Iran and met with top leaders before returning to Iraq to whip up hostility to the U.S. presence, particularly among the 2 million Shiite poor who inhabit the Baghdad slum known as Sadr City.

Iraqi sources told United Press International that Sadr is known to be close to, and to receive funds from, Hassan Nasrallah, head of the Lebanese Shiite militant organization, Hezbollah, an offspring of the Iranian mullahs.

As an Iraqi said, "The Middle Eastern governments are masters of double-games -- and the Iranian mullahs are much more clever than Iran's other neighbors, the Syrians and the Turks." **(United Press International, Nov 22, 2003)**

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.

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The Baltimore Sun

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Iranian mischief undercuts Iraqi hopes

... According to Iranian government sources, Tehran has smuggled large amounts of weaponry into Iraq in the past two months, including mortars, anti-aircraft missiles, 106mm guns, 107mm multiple rocket launchers, RPG-7s and machine guns, largely hidden in agricultural fields and villages. The weapons were smuggled in trucks carrying fruit and vegetables, buses and utility vehicles to evade border inspections.

For months, the notorious al-Quds (Jerusalem) Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards has been working to spread its influence in the Shiite-dominated southern regions of Iraq with the ultimate goal of erecting a sister Islamic republic there.

After major military operations ended in Iraq, many Iraqi expatriates, groomed, trained and funded by the mullahs for years, were dispatched to the country to gain control of key local and government positions. They now dominate a major portion of southern Iraq, including Samawah, Meissan, Nasiriyah, Basra, Wasset, Karbala and Najaf provinces, according to sources with access to the Iranian government.

At least 2,000 Iranian and Iraqi clerics entered Iraq from Qom and Mashad in Iran. Truckloads of books, CDs and cassette tapes promoting Tehran's fundamentalist version of Islam accompanied them.

"Najaf residents talk of Iranians who take up long stays in the city's hotels," the Reuters news agency reported Sept. 7. "They suspect they are secret service agents sent to keep a close eye on developments on the ground." Even in Baghdad, a majority of the government agencies are run by Shiites, many loyal to Tehran, sources within Iranian agencies dealing with Iraqi affairs said....

Against this backdrop, as long as the fundamentalists control the reins of power in Iran, their sphere of influence would inevitably spill into Iraq... With the mullahs out of power, fundamentalist thinking would wither away under the power of democracy and secularism.

The United States and the international community must be firm against Tehran and support the call by Iranians and the opposition movement for a referendum for regime change in Iran.

Giving in to Tehran's demands, including the bombing of Iranian opposition camps, did not deter the clerics' postwar meddling in Iraq. Accommodating them now would be a recipe for disaster, for it would only invite further intervention, bringing Tehran a step closer to its dream of establishing an Islamic empire. Democracy in Iran is a prelude to democracy in Iraq, not vice versa.

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The Los Angeles Times

December 3, 2003

Threat of Iran's influence in Iraq

NAJAF, Iraq — With a suddenness that seems to have caught American officials by surprise, Shiite Muslim clerics who for decades ministered in the quiet obscurity of the back streets of this holy city are now driving key decisions about the future governance of the nation...

The Shiite community, which was brutally persecuted by Saddam Hussein and his Sunni Muslim-dominated Baath Party, would likely benefit from swift direct elections because Shiites make up about 60% of Iraq's population and their religious parties are, at this point, the most organized political force in the country.

But some Bush administration officials fear that if Shiite fundamentalists were to win at the polls, they would advance an anti-Western agenda with a theocratic bent reminiscent of Iran rather than build a relatively moderate democracy that protects the basic rights of all Iraqis, including women and minorities...

The [book fair in Najaf] was opened by the Iranian cleric Mohammed Ali Taskhiri, who spoke on behalf of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Taskhiri called for an "Islamic constitution," adding, almost as an admonishment, "The Shiite leaders know their responsibilities."

Iran's links to southern Iraq are complex — a combination of family ties, religious fraternity and spilled blood. Among the fair's best-attended exhibits was a set of tables where visitors could write a letter to Iran's late supreme leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Flocks of men gathered to fill out a piece of paper and hand it to a cleric standing nearby.

"It would be good to have a leader like Ayatollah Khomeini. He delivered Iran from darkness to light," said Saeed Kamal Khaderi. "I would prefer a cleric as a leader," he added in a wistful tone. "They are always on the right side."