

USADI Dispatch

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

Volume 1, No. 23

Thursday, April 8, 2004

USADI Commentary

Needed: An Anti-fundamentalist Front in Iraq

Iran's mullahs wrote the book on how to hijack a nation's long-denied aspirations for liberty and popular governance. Now Tehran and its proxies have put this "how-to" manual into action in Iraq.

Twenty five years ago, in the quasi-democratic environment immediately after 1979 revolution, Khomeini-led mullahs embarked on establishing their pillars of power through a vast network of mosques and other religious institutions. As their apparatus of suppression took roots, they eliminated the moderate *Shia* clerics and liberal politicians, and cracked down hard on the secular, democratic opposition forces. Elections in the absence of democratic participation served only to give fake legitimacy to the ruling theocracy.

Notwithstanding the obvious differences between Iran of 1979 and Iraq of 2004, there are striking similarities in today's Iraq. A nation just gone through a regime change after a major war is on its way to establish a pluralistic and democratic system of governance. But the dark forces which rubbed Iranians from a bright and democratic future are now bent on repeating their feat in Iraq.

True, one ought to refrain from making the grandiose suggestion that all Iraqi Shiites as followers of Iranian regime. Iraqi Shiites, like a majority of Sunnis and Kurds and others in that country, want popular governance, freedom and economic prosperity. But the ruling regime in Iran and its various proxies have rushed to fill in the political and ideological vacuum in the vulnerable Shiite areas to pave the way for their ultimate goal of creating a theocracy modeled after Iran.

The clerics have been playing all their cards cleverly since the beginning of the war. In the days following the war's end, there were numerous media reports about how methodically and quickly Tehran had started its campaign.

At the time, nobody wanted to acknowledge that Tehran had indeed launched its undeclared war on the United States and a democratic Iraq. It was a strategic mistake to ignore Tehran's mischief in Iraq or try to dissuade the mullahs through back channel negotiations and appeasement. Relying on Tehran's "good will" was as naive as believing Hitler's Germany would never attack Western Europe.

In a recent article, Ilan Berman of the American Foreign Policy Council noted that "Iran is rapidly emerging as the biggest beneficiary of the new regional status quo," in the post-Saddam Middle East. He warned that Iranian policy makers have begun to view their country as the natural "center of international power politics" and they have "wasted no time translating this vision into action."

The "beast" partially displayed itself over the weekend and gave us a glimpse of its destructive potential. The road to neutralizing this ominous threat passes through Tehran, the heartland of fundamentalism. We need to formulate a creative policy which would take into consideration the realities of the post-war Iraq and the opportunities that exist for potential alliances in order to form an anti-fundamentalist front there. Without question, anti-fundamentalist Iranians are a natural member of that front.

Italian Security Report Links Moqtada Sadr To Iran's Supreme Leader

ROME - Iraqi Shiite leader Moqtada Sadr, who is directing a widespread armed uprising against the coalition forces in Baghdad and southern Iraq, receives his orders directly from the office of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Italian foreign intelligence organization, Servizio per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Militare (SISMI), a unit of the Italian defense ministry, said today in a report to the Italian parliament.

The report, which prompted a call to foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi by Italian foreign minister Franco Frattini, said without political, financial and military support from the Supreme Leader, Moqtada Sadr and his al-Mahdi brigade could not have mounted their multiple, simultaneous attacks...

Agents of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp and the Quds special forces have infiltrated Iraq in the past months and have formed and organized Moqta Sadr's al-Mahdi brigade, SISMI said in its report. The Iranian agents work under the cover of several religious charity organizations in Sadr city in Baghdad and in the Shiite cities of Karbala, Najaf and Kufa, SISMI said. Iran is spending \$70 million per month to support these front organizations, it added.

The Supreme Leader has sent cleric Mohammad-Hossein Haeri to coordinate the efforts that are aimed at pushing the coalition forces out of Iraq, according to Italian daily *La Stampa*, which adds that, with that goal in mind, Sadr's al-Mahdi brigade has been attacking the Italian, Spanish, Bulgarian, Polish and Portuguese forces in Iraq. In his mission in Iraq, Haeri represents Qum-based senior Iraqi Shiite religious leader Ayatollah Kazem Haeri. Two Iranian intelligence officers who have recently defected to Britain have given the British intelligence agents documents showing the role being played by the Islamic Republic government in the recent unrest in Iraq, Italy's daily *La Reformista* reports, quoting British sources.

Radio Farda. April 08. 2004

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

Los Angeles Times

April 4, 2004

Iraqi Democrats Feeling Sidelined

WASHINGTON — Last summer, as Iraqis sweltered outside, the Coalition Provisional Authority met in the marbled corridors and air-conditioned offices of one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces to hash out how to fund political parties. The State Department was adamant, insisting that the CPA should maintain "an even playing field" and should not favor one party over another...

This may sound like the way to ensure fair elections. But while the CPA has maintained its neutrality, our adversaries have shown no such compunction.

One February evening, a governor from a southern province asked to see me. We met after dark at a friend's house. After pleasantries and tea, he got down to business. "The Iranians are flooding the city and countryside with money," he said. "Last month, they sent a truckload of silk carpets across the border for the tribal sheikhs. Whomever they can't buy, they threaten." The following week, I headed south to investigate. A number of Iraqis said the Iranians had channeled money through the offices of the Dawa Party, an Islamist political party, led by Governing Council member Ibrahim Jafari. On separate occasions in Baghdad and the southern city of Nasiriya, I watched ordinary Iraqis line up for handouts of money and supplies at Dawa offices. The largess seems to be having an effect: Polls indicate that Jafari is Iraq's most popular politician, enjoying a favorable rating by more than 50% of the electorate...

The CPA's evenhandedness may be well-intentioned, but to a society weaned on conspiracy theories, the United States' failure to support liberals and democrats signals support for the Islamists. Equal opportunity may exist in Washington, but not in Baghdad. Why, Iraqis ask, would the CPA ignore the influx of Iranian arms and money into southern Iraq if it had not struck some secret deal with Tehran or did not desire the resulting increase in militancy? Why would the Iranian border be largely unguarded a year after liberation?

Iraqi liberals are especially sensitive to signs of support for Shiite politician Abdelaziz Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, whose visit official Washington welcomed in January. Students affiliated with the Badr Corps, Hakim's militia, roam Basra University, forcing women to wear the veil. Signs proclaiming the supremacy of Hakim are affixed to doors across the university, and professors say they are afraid to remove them. In Nasiriya and Karbala, Iraqis lament they can no longer speak openly, lest they become the subject of retaliation by Iranian-funded gangs...

We should not be more willing to help our adversaries than our friends. Democracy is about not only elections, but also about tolerance, compromise and liberty. Twenty-five years ago, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, declared "the first day of God's government." In a rushed referendum supervised by armed vigilantes, Iranians voted for theocracy. For a quarter century, they have struggled to undo their mistake. It would be a betrayal of Bush's vision as well as 24 million Iraqis if we replicate it in Iraq.

Michael Rubin is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and was a governance team advisor for the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq.

Washington Times

April 7, 2004

Iran, Hezbollah Support al-Sadr

Sheik Muqtada al-Sadr, the fiery Iraqi Shi'ite cleric who ordered his fanatical militia to attack coalition troops, is being supported by Iran and its terror surrogate Hezbollah, according to military sources with access to recent intelligence reports...

Sheik al-Sadr, who has traveled to Iran and met with its hard-line Shi'ite clerics, is an ardent foe of the United States who wants all foreign troops to leave.

The United States suspects that his goal is to create a hard-line Shi'ite regime in Iraq modeled after Tehran's government. Military sources said Sheik al-Sadr is being aided directly by Iran's Revolutionary Guard, which plays a large role in running that country, and by Hezbollah, an Iranian-created terrorist group based in Lebanon.

One of the sources said these two organizations are supplying the cleric with money, spiritual support and possibly weapons. "Iran does not want a success in Iraq," the source said.

"A democratic Iraq is a death knell to the mullahs." Sheik al-Sadr upped the ante during the weekend by calling for his 3,000-strong militia, the Army of the Mahdi, to begin attacking coalition forces. His fiery words touched off attacks throughout southern Iraq.