

Iran turns up the Heat

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By now, anyone with a lick of sense can see that the war in Iraq has been a dead-loss. Still, few people understand how it has disrupted the region's strategic balance and is quickening America's decline as a world power.

The US is already facing fierce headwinds in the near future with the deflating housing market, the falling dollar, and the growing prospects of a deep recession. A sudden realignment in the Middle East would be a major hit to the American economy. Even so, it's looking more and more like big changes are on the way.

The problem is that American power is waning just as Iran's is ascendant. This doesn't bode well for the "Great Satan" whose economy relies on dependable sources of cheap oil.

Iran is playing a clever game in Iraq using US occupation forces to crush the Ba'athist-led resistance while expanding their influence via the Shiite militias. This is a "lose-lose" situation for the United States. American troops must continue to focus on one enemy while they inadvertently strengthen the other. How long will it be before the Bush administration sees that they've been supporting the very group which is most hostile to American interests?

The smarter strategy would have been to replace Saddam but leave the Ba'ath Party in power. That way civil services and government bureaucracy could have continued without radical changes to the entire system. The Bush plan was the fast-track to anarchy, a phenomenon which now grips the entire country. Undoubtedly, the veteran-diplomats in James Baker's "Iraq Study Group" will want to engage the leaders of the Iraqi resistance as a last-ditch effort to cobble together a coalition government and stem the violence. But time is running out.

The mass kidnapping of 150 employees at the Education Ministry shows that the Shiite militias in the Interior Ministry are getting more brazen by the day. The gunmen stormed the building in broad daylight wearing government-issue uniforms and abducted their victims without a struggle. Prime Minister al-Maliki offered a feeble defense of the kidnappers saying that it was “not an act of terrorism” but merely a dispute between competing militias.

Al-Maliki has clearly cast his lot with his Shiite base.

While the militias do not take their orders directly from Tehran, it's clear that there's a tacit agreement between the two and their objectives are nearly identical. Both are determined to defeat the Sunni-led resistance so that the Ba'ath Party can never return to power. The mass abductions show that they are moving as quickly as possible to execute their strategy.

The US military has fallen into a trap and is (unwittingly) helping Iran expand its influence. In fact, Bush's plan to increase troop-strength by 20,000 in Baghdad just makes it easier for the militias to operate. The heavy American presence on the streets and checkpoints forces the Sunni resistance to remain underground while the Shiite militias conduct their round-ups and raids with complete impunity. It's no wonder they've stepped up operations in recent weeks. The talk of an American withdrawal following the midterms has only increased their determination to crush the resistance while American troops still provide cover.

Who could have imagined that US forces would be acting as security guards for Iranian-backed militias?

In fact, members of the Iranian political establishment like Pirouz Mojtahedzadeh are now openly calling “for the US to REMAIN in Iraq until it has established a strong, stable central government capable of providing adequate security.” ([Kim Murphy LA Times](#))

Of course, Iranians have to be discreet in their support for the ongoing occupation, but the truth is obvious; Bush is laying the groundwork for a fundamentalist regime in Baghdad by quashing the secular, Ba'athist-backed resistance.

Does Bush really believe he can control a Shiite-dominated government? Or does he really understand what's going on?

Can't he see that the US-Shiite alliance is simply a “marriage of convenience” that will end as soon as the Sunnis are sufficiently weakened and there is no longer a threat of them returning to power?

The Baker group was formed as a last-gasp attempt to avert the greatest foreign policy train-wreck in American history. It's no surprise that Bush and Israeli PM Olmert decided to conduct their high-level meetings on the same day that the Iraq Study Group met in the Oval Office. It was clearly meant to subvert Baker's impact on the news-cycle. As soon as Bush had used Baker as a prop for his public relations photo-op (showing Bush's “openness to new ideas”) the ex-diplomats were bundled out the servants' exit so Bush could put the final touches on the plans for bombing Iran's nuclear facilities.

The whole event was perfectly choreographed to marginalize Baker and undermine the group's recommendations.

This just proves that Bush's throttling in the midterm elections has had no effect

whatsoever. He's still firmly in Cheney's clutches and edging ever-closer to Armageddon. There's no indication that anything substantial has changed.

Cheney's approach is fundamentally flawed. It will take more than laser-guided munitions or "bunker busting" bombs to beat Iran. In fact, that will only speed up America's inevitable withdrawal from Iraq. Even if half of Iran is buried beneath glowing-nuclear rubble, they still have the wherewithal to take out every oil tanker, every oil field, every oil depot, every oil platform, and every oil pipeline in the entire gulf region. How long will America's teetering economy persist with its Middle East arteries slashed and oil futures shooting through the stratosphere.

Then, of course, Iran has the option of smuggling high-tech weaponry, anti-tank missiles and the whole array of military hardware into Iraq, where they can swiftly cut off supply-lines, wreak havoc across the country, and force an American retreat.

A war against Iran is a foolhardy scheme that has no chance of succeeding.

Communiqué connects Iran to Iraqi Militias

[A chilling communiqué from the Shiite-led "Badr Brigade" has appeared in Alliraqnews.](#) The message warns of an agreement between the Sunnis and the "Anglo-American occupation forces" which threatens the continued dominance of the Shiite-led government. Leaders from the Badr Brigade" intend to intensify their attacks on all "public offices and institutions", to "neutralize the activities of journalists, media and intellectuals", to undermine "any attempt to rebuild the Iraqi army", and prepare for "an armed confrontation" with the enemy.

The message calls on all Shiites, including employees in the "Ministry of Defense and Interior Ministry to join the Badr Brigade, the Mahdi Army, and the Al-Dawa Party, to continue stealing weapons and equipment" to get ready for the conflagration.

The communiqué adds ominously: "The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, providing us with all weapons and equipment for the battle, as well as the preparations of troops from the Revolutionary Guards for rapid intervention near the border areas."

The message is signed by the Secretary-General Badr Organization.

Whether the communiqué is authentic or not is almost irrelevant. The blueprint is indistinguishable from the pattern of activity on the ground. The militias are using the occupation to strengthen their base and ready themselves for the inevitable confrontation with US forces. Behind the scenes, Iran is patiently waiting for America's hourglass to run out of sand.

Prime Minister Al-Maliki has aligned himself with the main Shiite militias. He has issued a warrant for Harith al-Dhari, the head of Iraq's prestigious Association of Muslim Scholars, on the charges of "inciting violence and terrorism among the Iraqi people". It is a baseless claim intended to drive the Sunnis to out of the government and set the stage for a Shiite dominated-regime.

The Sunnis have left according to plan. There will be no coalition government and civil war is all but certain. The bloodbath has just begun.

Bush has opened Pandora's Box and there'll be a terrible price to pay. He has allowed Iran to take root in Baghdad and upset the regional balance of power. Now, there really are no easy solutions. The only question is whether the impending holocaust is containable or if it will consume the entire region.

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