

Switching Focus from Iraq to Iran

By [Ray McGovern](#)

Global Research, October 24, 2011

[Consortium News](#) 23 October 2011

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#),
[IRAQ REPORT](#)

Exclusive: President Barack Obama's withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq is a blow to the neocons who had long dreamt of permanent military bases. But the neocons are now trying to spin the Iraq disaster into another excuse to confront Iran.

You might think that by now I would be so used to infuriating neocon drivel that, to preserve my own sanity, I would avoid looking at the *Washington Post* or at least its editorial pages.

I have tried. But it seems that after almost a half century in Washington, and particularly after the recent rash of "wars of choice," it is simply not possible. One has to keep an eye on what bloody mischief the neocons are devising.

The *Post*'s [lead editorial](#) on Sunday is ostensibly about Iraq and [blaming President Barack Obama](#) if things get worse after U.S. troops leave in December. But these days Iran is the main concern of the neocons who infect that editorial page.

In the wake of Obama's withdrawal announcement on Friday, the *Post*'s neocon editors are worried that:

"Mr. Obama's decision to carry out a complete withdrawal [of troops from Iraq] sharply increases the risk that ... Iran will be handed a crucial strategic advantage in its regional cold war with the United States; and that a potentially invaluable U.S. alliance with an emerging Iraqi democracy will wither."

The bugaboo of Iran is raised no less than six times in the five-paragraph editorial. One is prompted to ask an innocent question: Which country did the neocons think would profit if Saddam Hussein, Iran's archrival, were removed and his army destroyed?

America's neocons apparently hoped that Israel would be the beneficiary, with a U.S.-occupied Iraq serving as a land-based aircraft carrier for applying military pressure on neighboring Iran and Syria. But you don't start a war on hope.

That Iran would almost surely benefit the most from the U.S. invasion of Iraq was a no-brainer. And that is precisely why, before the attack on Iraq, Israeli leaders were insisting "we do Iran first."

But the U.S. neocons thought they knew better and that sequencing Iraq before Iran would be an easier sell with the American people. After all, they had already been trained to hate Iraq's Saddam Hussein because of the first Persian Gulf War in 1990-91. In the early part of the last decade, Iran's leaders were a much more amorphous target.

The neocons also thought the conquest of Iraq would be easy with American military might crushing not only the Iraqi military but the country's will to fight. "Shock and awe" would pave the way to a "cakewalk."

In 2003, the joke circulating in neocon-dominated Washington was whether the next U.S. target should be Iran or Syria with the punch-line: "Real men go to Tehran."

Also, the neocons' top allies in the Bush administration – Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld – understood Bush's personal animus toward Hussein. Bush once called Hussein "the guy that tried to kill my dad." Cheney and Rumsfeld knew an open door when they saw one. Bush, an impressionable fundamentalist Christian-Zionist, was bereft of strategic understanding.

However, eight-plus years later – with nearly 4,500 U.S. soldiers dead and about \$1 trillion spent, with Iraq torn by sectarian and political violence and with the Iraqi government essentially ushering the U.S. forces out by refusing to extend immunity from Iraqi laws for any U.S. troops who would remain – the neocons must finally face the hard truth: their grandiose scheme was a flop.

Chicken Hawks

It is not only American soldiers who will be coming home from an immoral, illegal and ill-thought-out war. The chickens, too, are coming home to roost. And, without admitting they were really dumb, the neocon chicken hawks are inadvertently admitting *soto voce*, that they didn't have a strategic clue.

And they still don't. It is a safe bet that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud associates are admonishing the neocons who still hold great sway in Official Washington: "See? We told you we should have done Iran first. But it's not too late.

"Now we have another compelling reason to put the 'military option' on Iran right in the middle of the table — and, finally, exercise that option. Or you can go down in history as a bunch of wimps."

The new compelling reason for war is that Iran's influence in the region has zoomed in this zero-sum game between "evil" Tehran and the Tel Aviv-Washington "axis of good." In the words of this Sunday's *Post*, "Iran will be handed a crucial strategic advantage," ironically, because of the disaster in Iraq.

So, there's no time to waste. To warn still-gullible Americans about the dangers of Iran's new strategic advantage, it's imperative to enlist the neocons in the U.S. news media, those running [the foreign policy shops for the leading Republican candidates](#), and the neocon holdovers inside the Obama administration.

Time, also, to revive the specter of Iran getting a nuclear weapon. Let's see if neocon favorite CIA Director David Petraeus can twist enough arms of his subordinates to reverse the unanimous judgment of the U.S. intelligence community that Iran stopped work on a nuclear weapon in 2003.

Petraeus has always risen to the occasion when the neocons have wanted to accuse Iran of meddling in Iraq — evidence or no evidence. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Petraeus's CIA](#)

[Steers Obama on Policy.”\]](#)

Let’s have him issue warnings about the possibility that Iran will take potshots at U.S. troops as they leave.

And, oh yeah, let’s get him to provide the kind of “intelligence” that will turn a cockamamie plot about Iran supporting an assassination attempt on the Saudi ambassador from admittedly “implausible” status to that of plausible — well, plausible enough for the neocons who dominate the Fawning Corporate Media (FCM). [See Consortiumnews.com’s “[Petraeus’s CIA Fuels Iran Murder Plot.](#)”]

Chalabi Made Us Do It

Speaking of which: One of the *Post*’s most prominent neocon columnists, David Ignatius, sought out the neocons’ beloved charlatan Iraq War propagandist Ahmed Chalabi, whom Ignatius describes as “the most effective lobbyist in favor of the 2003 U.S. invasion.”

“You will not be surprised,” wrote Ignatius, “that Chalabi offered no apologies for a war that cost many thousands of American and Iraqi lives and more than a trillion dollars. Quite the contrary, he lauded the United States for its role in overthrowing Saddam Hussein,” though he criticized the follow-through of the occupation.

Ignatius, too, raised the obligatory specter of Iran, asking Chalabi about reports that he has become “an overly enthusiastic supporter of Iran.” The slippery Chalabi replied that he favored good relations with Iran and “wanted Iraq and Iran to be ‘a meeting ground rather than a battle ground.’”

Is Ignatius, at this late stage in the U.S. history with Chalabi, not yet aware that he tends to play both ends ... and then goes with the side that appears to be winning?

Ignatius wants us to believe that the mess in Iraq was pretty much all Chalabi’s fault, ignoring the painful reality that Chalabi could have accomplished zilch if not for the neocon-dominated FCM that eagerly promoted his self-serving lies.

Many of the Iraqi “walk-ins” who lied to U.S. intelligence and the FCM about Saddam Hussein’s supposed WMD and alleged ties to al-Qaeda had been scripted beforehand by Chalabi’s Iraqi National Congress.

Knowing Chalabi (all too well), Ignatius says it should come as no surprise that Chalabi remains adamantly unapologetic for the war on Iraq. But why should Chalabi be subjected to any accountability when almost none of his willing collaborators in the press have been?

Chalabi may have been, as Ignatius claims, “the secret instigator of the Iraq war.” Even so, he would have accomplished little without a mountain of intentional gullibility at the *Washington Post* and other top U.S. news outlets, a pattern that continues to this day.

Ray McGovern works for Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served as an Army infantry/intelligence officer and then a CIA analyst for a total of 30 years and is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).

[**Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page**](#)

[**Become a Member of Global Research**](#)

Articles by: [Ray McGovern](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca