

The Iraqi war to clean out Khomeini

by Robert Dreyfuss

The warfare that has broken out between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran currently has the potential to create an entirely new international strategic balance, pending the ultimate resolution of the conflict. Should Ayatollah Khomeini fall from power as a result of the ongoing conflict and its aftermath, or should the Muslim Brotherhood regime survive in a modified but contained form, then the entire decade-long strategy of the Anglo-American financial faction will be in jeopardy. They will have lost their "Islamic card," and as a result, the international power and influence of the nations of the European Monetary System and their OPEC allies will be greatly strengthened.

Questions still remain in regard to the ultimate intentions of both the Soviet Union and continental Western Europe in allowing the Iraqis to pursue their offensive deep into Iran. But at the same time, both the Carter administration and the British policymaking elite have been caught off guard by the events in the Persian Gulf. They are still groping for a policy to deal with the threat of a victory by Iraq and allied Iranian exile circles.

In the midst of the policy vacuum in Anglo-American circles, some factions, like those associated with Zbigniew Brzezinski and Israel's Menachem Begin, are already demanding a strong Anglo-American intervention to defend the Khomeini regime and prevent even an apparent Iraqi victory. But at present, President Carter is operating within a limited range of options, given the restrictions placed against U.S. intervention by America's European allies, especially the governments of France and West Germany.

It is *EIR's* evaluation that a significant and even determining factor in the overall situation around the Iraq-Iran conflict can be introduced by continued strong, independent action by the government of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, and meaningful action by exile circles led by Prime Minister Shahpour Bakhtiar.

Two war aims

According to intelligence sources, Iraq's intention in launching its offensive against Iran, which followed months of Iranian border provocations, is twofold: first, to recapture Iraqi territory from a long-standing border conflict between the two countries; and second, to force the political collapse of the Khomeini regime. The scope of the Iraqi offensive, for which the entire nation has been mobilized, indicates that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has determined that Ayatollah Khomeini and Iran's Muslim Brotherhood regime must be handed a crushing defeat in order to halt the spread of so-called "Islamic fundamentalism" into the Arab world and other countries bordering Iran.

In its offensive Iraq has received support, either publicly or privately, from the Soviet Union, France, West Germany, many Arab countries including Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and from anti-Khomeini Iranian opposition forces.

Opposed to the Iraqi offensive are primarily Great Britain, the United States, and Israel.

For several years, Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security adviser, has sought to build an alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood secret society,

a powerful British-sponsored Islamic cult, and with the Khomeini regime itself, which came to power in 1979 with the full support and encouragement of the Carter White House and State Department. Brzezinski believed that Muslim fundamentalism would be an ally of U.S. strategic interests in the area, serving as a "bulwark against Communism," and increasing Anglo-American leverage over Middle East oil and financial power.

It is that entire strategy, Brzezinski's "arc of crisis," that stands in jeopardy from the Iraqi offensive.

Iraqi strategy

From the initial pattern of the Iraqi attack into Iran, and from intelligence analysts in Washington, the following conclusions can be drawn about Iraqi strategy in the war.

The fighting began in earnest on Sept. 22 with a preemptive strike by the Iraqi air force against ten Iranian air force bases scattered throughout the country, including Teheran itself. Over the next 48 hours, Iraqi fighter-bombers continually pounded Iranian air force facilities in an attempt to eliminate Iran's air capability. At the same time, Iraq's extremely sophisticated electronic air defense systems took a heavy toll of Iranian jets which attempted counterstrikes against Iraq, and Iran lost at least 50 planes in the first two days of the war.

Highly informed military specialists reported that because of Iran's lack of maintenance teams and ground facilities, routine equipment failures and mechanical upkeep problems are expected to put the vast bulk of the Iranian air force out of commission almost immediately.

Once that initial Iraqi goal is accomplished, then Iraq's armored ground forces can advance under an almost invincible air cover, and the Iraqi home front will be permanently secured from Iranian attack.

Under these circumstances, Iraq would be able to advance at will deep into Iran, and to inflict painful and humiliating defeats on the Iranian forces. As the Iraqis advance, the political authority of the Khomeini regime—which is already hated by the bulk of Iran's population—will crumble. Local, tribal, and regional leaders, dissident military units, and Iranian clergy opposed to Khomeini could then launch a combined civil insurrection against the Khomeini dictatorship.

Thus, according to informed sources, Iraq is now counting on its attack triggering a political upsurge against Khomeini.

Signs of the rebellion have already started to become known. In Iran's northern province of Azerbaijan, the popular clergyman and opponent of Khomeini, Ayatollah Shariatmadari, has escaped from his house arrest in Qom and returned to his native Tabriz, Iran's most populous regional capital, where he is expected to lead

an open revolt against Khomeini. In Kurdistan and Khuzestan, as well as in the tribal areas of western and central Iran, a series of growing insurrections are developing, and at least three entire western provinces are reported already to be free of Khomeini influence.

Further, according to Iranian sources, exiled Prime Minister Shahpour Bakhtiar and other Iranian opposition leaders have traveled to Baghdad or contacted the Iraqis about coordinating their struggle against Khomeini. Although few Iranian opposition leaders can afford to be associated publicly with Iraq's attack on their nation, privately they have welcomed it. The *Sunday Telegraph* of London reported that Bakhtiar was in Iraq this week to coordinate exile activities on the eve of the start of the war.

Alongside their military offensive, the Iraqis have also launched a political broadside against Khomeini's partisans. In one appeal, the Iraqi leadership stated its distinction between the Iranian armed forces and the fascist Revolutionary Guard, appealing to the Iranian army to stop fighting. "We bear no grudge against the Iran regular armed forces, but only against the Khomeini Guard," Baghdad announced. Iraq also issued an appeal to the "sons of Iran's ethnic and religious communities" to join the fight against Khomeini's "racists."

Support for Iraqis

Simultaneous with Iraq's declaration of war against Iran, issued Sept. 21, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz left Baghdad for Moscow. The Aziz mission, though highly secret, was reportedly aimed at securing a continued flow of Soviet arms to Iraq, which has a standing treaty of friendship with the U.S.S.R. The following day, an unhappy Iranian Ambassador to Moscow, Mohammed Mokri, met with Soviet officials and complained that he was not able to persuade Moscow to halt the flow of arms to Iraq. "We are surprised at our Soviet friends," said Mokri.

Though publicly neutral in the conflict, the Soviet Union has hinted broadly that it supports the actions of its Iraqi ally. A Sept. 22 *Pravda* article said bluntly, "The United States is favoring Iran against Iraq." In Baghdad itself, the Iraqi press prominently reported the *Pravda* piece as a sign of Soviet support.

Then, on Sept. 24, Tariq Aziz—returning briefly to Baghdad—left for Paris where he held a meeting with President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. According to French sources, the French, who also supply arms to the Iraqis, are quietly supporting the Baghdad offensive. Newspapers in Paris were effusively praising President Hussein of Iraq, calling him a "blockbuster patriot" and a man who lifted his nation "out of backwardness." In recent years, Paris and Baghdad have developed a close working relationship and France is supplying Iraq

with a nuclear industry, a defense industry, various advanced electronic systems, and so forth.

In the Arab world, Jordan, Kuwait, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates, have officially supported Iraq while Saudi Arabia, though silent, is widely known to support Iraq's action against Khomeini. In addition, Saudi Arabia and Jordan are trying to persuade Syria, which has opposed Iraq and tilted in favor of Iran, to join now with Baghdad against Khomeini.

U.S. paralysis

As for the Carter administration, which put the Khomeini regime in power, it is the belief of most U.S. analysts that the United States has no choice but to do nothing and watch the Iraqis defeat Iran. Although some limited options do exist, for the most part any American intervention runs the risk of touching off a direct U.S.-Soviet confrontation.

Since August, Carter has been working out a scheme to bring about a rapprochement with Iran, including the supply of American military spare parts and U.S. military advisers to Khomeini's regime, in exchange for freeing the U.S. hostages. Now, with the Iraqi offensive, that deal is shattered—and the U.S. is left without a policy.

Sept. 25 President Carter convened an emergency meeting of the NSC to discuss U.S. options.

According to Iranian military sources opposed to Khomeini, the chief U.S. contingency under consideration is the following.

First, in secret communication, the Carter administration will arrange for the Khomeini regime to launch a blockade of the crucial Straits of Hormuz in the Gulf. That action, which would halt the flow of two-thirds of the world's oil imports from the Persian Gulf countries, would then provide a pretext for direct U.S. naval action to break the blockade. With the conflict thus "internationalized," both Carter and Teheran hope they can halt the Iraqi advance. But such a strategy is dangerous in the extreme because of the likelihood of Soviet intervention, including possibly a direct Soviet military move into Iran.

Another U.S. option under consideration involves a U.S.-backed coup in Iran bringing to power the Iranian military loyal to President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, at the expense of the more extreme Muslim Brotherhood leaders. Such a strategy presumably would allow Teheran to free the hostages and then ask for American assistance. But most analysts also believe that this strategy is not viable.

At any rate, Israel is leading the outcry against the Iraqi advance. Prime Minister Begin, General Mordechai Gur, and other Israeli officials have branded Iraq as a "Soviet puppet" and warned that an Iraqi defeat of the Khomeini regime would create a new Arab super-

power. Gur said that Iraq was an "extremist, hard core member of the Rejection Front" and demanded action to stop Iraq.

A top Reagan adviser, Joseph Churba, a radical Zionist, stated his belief that Washington should immediately supply all the military spare parts Iran needs to defeat Iraq in exchange for the release of the American hostages!

Among more sober U.S. analysts, such as the *New York Times'* James Reston, the conclusion is that Washington must try to prevail upon Moscow to issue instructions to Iraq to halt the fighting. Regardless of whether such Soviet demands on Iraq would be heeded, Reston declared in a column entitled "Where is the Hot Line?" that even though there is the "possibility that Moscow might not agree" the Carter administration ought to ask the Soviets to restrain Iraq and cool down the fighting.

At best, Reston is reflecting the dawning realization that the United States, which once earlier this year had said it would use force to defend the Persian Gulf, is now reduced to asking Moscow to restore tranquility to the region.

That, if nothing else, is a measure of the blunders of the Carter-Brzezinski administration.

Iraq shatters U.S.-Iran pact on the hostages

by Judith Wyer

Iraq's invasion of Iran this week has left in shambles a months-long diplomatic venture launched by the Carter administration to free the American hostages in exchange for recognition, and arming, of the outlaw regime of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. Carter calculated that a release of the hostages on the eve of the Nov. 4 presidential elections would greatly enhance his chances of reelection.

So stunned was the administration over the Iraqi invasion that neither the President nor administration-officials have formulated a coherent response.

During a California campaign tour, President Carter told the press, "We have been monitoring the situation very closely. . . . We are doing everything we can to contribute to a peaceful resolution." A few hours afterwards Secretary of State Edmund Muskie gave a press conference from the United Nations which brought into question what intelligence the Chief Executive was "monitoring." A beleaguered Muskie stated: "Our resources in Iran are not all they were. . . . This is a serious