

# The Iran-Iraq war, the superpowers, and the British game-plan for savaging the Gulf

by Thierry Lalevée, European Bureau Chief

By the end of this month, the Persian Gulf region may very well undergo a crisis of international dimensions as a result of a reactivation of the 23-months-old war between Iran and Iraq, coupled with an increased destabilization of the Gulf sheikhdoms, including Saudi Arabia. This will be the direct consequence of the Lebanese crisis and of the inability of the Reagan administration to act as forcefully as the situation required in checking the Israeli military drive into Lebanon. Such a crisis will in turn provoke a new oil shock—with disastrous economic consequences. Eventually, it will most likely lead as well to a showdown between the superpowers; in the words of a senior Soviet analyst to the *Los Angeles Times* this summer, “Iran is the one place in the world where there exists the risk of a direct confrontation between American and Soviet troops.”

London—together with certain Israeli forces around Ariel Sharon and Yuval Neeman, is orchestrating the crisis with the aim of confronting the United States with yet another major foreign-policy failure. London and Jerusalem furthermore aim to force President Reagan to hand over his foreign policy to a “professional,” Henry Kissinger—the most hated man in the Middle East, in the Arab countries and Israel alike. London wants to re-emerge as the region’s sole protector and controller in the wake of the formation of two new “empires”—Israel and Iran—swallowing up, under British strategic control, the dismembered Arab states.

“Two hundred years of chaos in the Middle East” is London’s perspective for the region, in the words of Philip Adam, director of the London Ditchley Foundation—a process through which the “colonial creations” which are today’s Arab states “will collapse and be split into smaller units and entities.”

It is nothing less than the destruction of the entire region which is planned by these modern followers of key British lunatic Arnold Toynbee, the man who for 50 years oversaw Britain’s intelligence operations which are to be of use today—from the Islamic Asharite current represented by Iran’s Khomeini to the Arab world’s Ikhwan al-Muslimun, the Muslim Brotherhood. As Arab diplomatic sources have been warning, this means the destruction of more than 6,000 years of civilization on a scale unequalled even by the Mongol hords. “Our civilization is being wiped away. The populations are turned into beasts. Racialism will re-emerge, Arabs

against Jews, Persians against Arabs.”

President Reagan recently received a direct warning to that effect when Egyptian Foreign Minister Hassan Ali presented to him the full consequences of America’s passivity against Israel. The 50,000-strong demonstration in Kuwait on Aug. 8 under the banner of “Death to America” was the first sign of things to come.

## Khomeini’s role

A key pawn in that plot is Iran’s Khomeini and his ability in the upcoming weeks to mount a successful military offensive against Iraq as a first step toward the “Islamicization” of that country and the region. Iran’s offensives in Iraqi territory have so far met defeat; more than 27,000 Iranian soldiers are reported to have been killed, that is, butchered, as most were untrained “Baseej” or people’s militias deployed on the front line as human waves. The defeats have reinforced those inside Iran who see the war as pointless, a view shared by most of the Iranian army leaders who, like the general chief of staff, recently warned against pursuing the war further as Iran’s economy collapses, and threatened to resign if the Pasdarans (revolutionary guards) or the Baseej were not withdrawn from the front.

The ongoing economic collapse has provoked a credibility crisis for Khomeini in the eyes of the large part of the population which had supported him till now; dissatisfaction is now visible in the ranks of the army and even of the lower-level clergy. As an example, take the cancellation *sine die* of plans by some of Khomeini’s most fanatical followers in the so-called Meshed Mafia led by Ayatollah Golpayagani to try Ghotbzadeh and Ayatollah Shariat-Madari for conspiracy against Khomeini as a first step toward a major purge inside the clergy itself, despite an announcement in early July that the trial was soon to begin. Fears of a major religious and theological split forced that postponement, and the same happened to plans discussed last May to dissolve the Ministry of Defense and the regular army, in order to establish a ministry of the Pasdarans. The idea was quickly tabled when the army opposed it.

Hence Khomeini’s ability to wage a war relies more or less exclusively at this point on Iran’s supporters in London, Damascus, and Jerusalem.

Over the past few months, Damascus has emerged as

Khomeini's most loyal friend, politically and militarily, out of its own hatred of the Baathist regime in Baghdad. As reported by the Beirut correspondent of the West German newspaper *Hanauer Anzeiger*, Syria was the prime mover behind the July 15 Iranian military offensive. A month earlier, in mid-June, the Syrian and Iranian Foreign Ministers had met in Damascus to discuss carving up a dismembered Iraq, once an Islamic regime led by Khomeini puppet Ayatollah Baghr Hakim were installed in Baghdad. A few days later, Syrian Defense Minister Tlas flew to Teheran to complete the details; the Syrian ambassador to Teheran General Younes informed the Iranians in early July of an ongoing Iraqi military reorganization, transmitting Assad's evaluation of the need to attack Iraq earlier than planned, on Iraq's national day, rather than at the end of the month of Ramadan.

To prove its good faith, Syria itself redeployed troops at Iraq's borders while making a few overflights above Iraqi territory, as a signal that it could enter the war at any chosen moment.

Iran's second-best ally after Syria has been none other than Israel, the country Khomeini is supposedly dedicated to destroying. Intelligence sources have reported that Palestinian weapons seized by the Israelis in Lebanon were quickly recycled for hard currencies for Israel's benefit while benevolent arms dealers organized their shipment to Iran.

Israeli military help to Iran has been going on for quite some time, as former Iranian Prime Minister Shahpour Bakhtiar underlines in his accompanying interview. Israel's aims have been twofold from the beginning: to use Iran to destroy a most hated enemy, Iraq, while again developing relations with the Iranian military, "to be useful some day," in the words of many Israeli analysts. Such a connection has allowed the Israelis to even give military tactical advisers to the Iranians, and it is expected that under such sponsorship-Iran will shift its focus of operation from Basrah into central Iraq. There may be a direct strike at Baghdad aiming perhaps at replicating the Israeli siege of Beirut, in time for the first series of conferences preparatory to the non-aligned summit.

## London's manipulation

Seeming to support Iraq in the first months of the war, as part of a strategy aimed at wooing the Arab world when the Carter administration was detestably involved in negotiations with Teheran, the British have for quite some time shifted their operational focus toward Teheran against Iraq. A clear sign was given last February when the Iranian military negotiated a huge arms deal in London.

Over the past few months, British intelligence officers have been advising the Iranians to go for a rapid dismemberment of Iraq, beginning with the creation of an "Islamic republic of Basrah" as a first step toward splitting the country into smaller entities. Their focus on Basrah is prompted by their wish to re-establish that particular region as a key British operational base. The model is the former sheikhdom of Muhammara, of which Basrah was the capital, ruled in the

early part of the century by Sheikh Alkhaz'al. As early as 1839, the British East India Company had established there the first British-sponsored Freemasonic lodge, which functioned as a conspiracy center for Britain's intelligence operations under the guise of "pan-Islamism" or "pan-Arabism." Under the guidance of the British-controlled "Grand Lodge of Hamburg," the Basrah center sponsored the networks from which the present leaders of the Iranian revolution came, such as Beheshti and Khalkhali. An attempt by the British to establish the sheikhdom as an independent entity failed in the early 1920s, and the "Islamic Republic of Basrah"—cutting Iraq from any outlet to the sea—is nothing but a re-activation of that old plan.

Activation of the old secessionist tendencies of the Chaldean or Assyrian synthetic religious cults in Iraq is also under way. A creation of Basrah's Freemasonic lodges these cults have re-surfaced in Teheran in the form of a "Chaldean liberation movement" which a year ago claimed responsibility for the murder of two Iraqi diplomats in the U.A.E.

Yet Britain's master card is obviously the Kurds, used again and again, not only against Iraq, but also against Iran, Syria and Turkey. Under the sponsorship of the British-Kurdish Friendship Society, led by the maverick Lord John Kilbracken, a Kurdish upheaval in Iraq is being planned to coincide with an Iranian military offensive. Kilbracken, just back from Iraq, detailed in a recent article in the *London Guardian* how the Iraqi army will be forced to be deployed at two simultaneous fronts. Between 10,000 and 15,000 Iraqi troops are already blocked in Kurdistan, while Kurdish rebels are being organized out of Damascus.

For London, Iran is nothing but a pawn, and as an "Iranian empire" is mooted, British anthropologists working out of Cambridge and Oxford are busy profiling Iran's own tribes for a similar split of the country.

## The Middle East and the superpowers

Within that political geometry, the two superpowers will soon face a crisis none of them really wanted, but which stupidity and *Realpolitik* helped produce. Ironically, while both superpowers welcome, for quite different reasons, the Iranian revolution as a "bulwark against communism" and a "true anti-imperialist revolution" respectively, Washington and Moscow have been forced by other realities to shift toward a neutrality vis-à-vis Iran and renewed support for Iraq.

Talk of resuming diplomatic relations between Washington and Baghdad has not materialized, but only a few weeks ago U.S. Defense Secretary Weinberger blasted Iran for attacking Iraqi territory, while American support has been channelled to Iraq via Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and there are rumors that Secretary of State Shultz is expected to crack down on the Israeli-Teheran connection.

Similarly Moscow, out of the need to better its relations with the Arab world in the wake of the Lebanese crisis, has been supporting the U.N. resolutions calling for an immedi-

ate cease-fire between the two countries—resolutions supported by Iraq. And when Baghdad threatened to break the 1972 friendship treaty should Moscow fail to renew its military deliveries, the Soviets speedily came through, and Baghdad, in a good-will gesture, released a score of Iraqi communists from jail. Predictably, Teheran answered by arresting Iranian communists and banning the main Tudeh newspaper *Mardom*, driving underground once again the communist Tudeh leadership led by “Ayatollah” Kianouri. With the Soviet Baku radio beaming into Iran characterizing Rafsanjani as a “rat” or Montazeri as an “ass,” a slow deterioration of Iranian/Soviet relations began a few weeks ago; on Aug. 6 Tass blasted Khomeini for the first time for heading a “theocratic regime.” In between, mullahs of various ranks suspected of sympathy for the Tudeh had been purged. Hojatesslam Khomeini, the man who had controlled the Iranian “students” at the American embassy, was voted out of the post of deputy speaker of the parliament and Nabui, the man who had negotiated the release of the hostages, was forced to resign as deputy prime minister.

Disillusioned by the present regime, Moscow has obviously not abandoned its hopes of controlling the country by proxy. Aware of the ongoing process of internal political disintegration, it remains ready to act. This is where British intelligence and its allies will intervene as they know that Khomeini will launch Iran into a desperate flight forward against its neighbors or internally, rather than admit defeat. Such an action would in turn force the Americans to intervene in the region to protect their allies in the Gulf. But an American military presence would force the Soviets to react on profile, too, and intervene in northern Iran. That’s London’s scenario, and that will be realized unless the superpowers enter into an agreement which 1) would curtail Iran’s military supply lines; 2) back up the moderate Arab countries against Iran and the threat of radicalization of the region; 3) make the commitment that whatever happens in Iran as a result of such steps would be entirely an internal matter and thus the business of none of them. Then London’s manipulation and bluff could be called and the region stabilized.

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Interview: Shahpour Bakhtiar

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## Iranian ex-Premier on Israel’s intrigues

*The following interview with Shahpour Bakhtiar, former Prime Minister of Iran, was conducted by Mary and Thierry Lalevé in Paris, on July 7.*

**EIR:** Could you tell us your view of the situation in the

Middle East, and particularly the situation in Lebanon?

**Bakhtiar:** I can tell you that Khomeini will once again show his real face after the withdrawal of Iraqi forces [from Iran—ed.]. He will find another alibi, another diversionary maneuver. One day it is the American hostages, another day it is the war with Iraq, another day it is the call to open the gates of Jerusalem to the Islamic forces. All that has as its main aim to divert the attention of the population in Iran, which has many problems.

I think that following the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Iran, Khomeini is going to say, “I am going to go to Iraq to impose my Shiite doctrine.” This is contrary to international order. It is like Hitler, who said, “I possess the truth. I am going to impose it on others.” And Khomeini’s flag will fly perhaps over Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, or the states of the Persian Gulf.

As for Lebanon, I think personally that the country can hope to free itself from a certain number of contingencies. I knew Lebanon when I was very young, when I was at the Lycée Français in Beirut when I was about 16 or 17. It was a beautiful country, where several communities—Jews, Armenians, Druzes, Orthodoxes, Maronites, Shiites, and Sunnis—lived in peace.

But the problems of the Middle East will not be solved in Iran or in Lebanon. The problems are infinitely more complicated. The problem of the Persian Gulf, for example, is that these countries are not really countries. These countries did not exist when I was a boy. Names like Bahrain or Kuwait existed, but that was all. Then oil was discovered. It was expensive; the Western world needed it, and some people got rich. These countries are not viable countries. When the oil runs out, the burning desert will return. These countries are not like Iran, Iraq, Turkey, or even Lebanon, which have other resources, not only oil. All these problems exist, and will not be solved by the Iran-Iraq war.

**EIR:** What do you think about the relations between the Soviet Union and Khomeini?

**Bakhtiar:** The essence of Khomeini is archaic. It is a dictatorship. It is a total absurdity. The Soviet Union would not be happy if there were a social-democratic regime in Iran. She would prefer a regime more like the Shah’s, knowing perfectly well that it would finish badly one day, a regime like the Khomeini regime, where there is disorder, killings, executions. “That is good,” think the Soviets, saying to themselves, “We will wait our turn, we will wait till the fruit is ripe and falls from the tree.” That is why the Soviets and Khomeini do not have bad relations. They understand each other. I find the Soviet Union even more cynical than Khomeini.

**EIR:** What do you think about Israeli aid to Khomeini?

**Bakhtiar:** Khomeini has received technical assistance, especially military, mainly for aviation—spare parts, maintenance, repairs, and so on—during the war. . . . Israel had