

situation. Given the Israeli military gun at the back of Barak's head, it was he, Clinton, not Arafat, who was the real author of the failure in those negotiations. We, to that degree, are paying the price of Clinton's blunder today.

It is to be conceded that very few among the leading, best military strategists of modern society have actually mastered the underlying principles of economics, but all the greatest commanders and related strategists from Leonardo da Vinci and Machiavelli, up through the pre-1951 period in U.S. command, had been steeped in the role of a military-engineering view of logistics as the foundation of all competent strategic planning. With the rise of the utopian faction in our military, the tooty-fruity teaching of sick brands of sociology and psychology replaced the traditional competence of the tradition of Sylvanus Thayer's West Point. It is those "special warfare" tooty-fruities who are in command of the long-range military policy behind the present focus on Iraq.

Those who are serious enough to follow up on this point, will study carefully my recently published "Economics: At The End of a Delusion." Sane governments will study that writing carefully; otherwise, the title, "At the End of a Delusion," were suitably carved on their tombstone.

There will be more to come on this important theme, in the near future.

U.S. Threats Bring Iran and Iraq Closer

by Hussein al-Nadeem

Iran and Iraq, targetted by the "axis of evil" statement of U.S. President George Bush, and by the imperial war faction in the Anglo-American establishment, are ironically now developing much-improved relations after decades of war and animosity. The change has been in progress since early 2001.

Two days before President Bush's Jan. 29 State of the Union speech, Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri al-Hadithi concluded an unprecedented, and successful, three-day visit to Iran. Al-Hadithi met with his Iranian counterpart, Kamal Kharrazi, and other officials—including, significantly, President Mohammed Khatami. In a surprise move, Khatami pledged political and humanitarian support to Iraq, if the United States attacks Iraq again. This was later met by a similar, reciprocal pledge from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

New Silk Road, and Security Agreements


Al-Hadithi's visit concluded many months of bilateral negotiations around war-time issues, and started a new chapter for peace-time cooperation. He announced on Jan. 31 the resumption of commercial flights between Tehran and Baghdad, for Iranian pilgrims who wish to visit the holy sites in Iraq. The Iranian news agency IRNA quoted the Iraqi minister as saying: "The coming of the Iranian visitors to us is very important. It is a basic factor to developing relations between the two Muslim states." Between 30,000 and 50,000 Iranians have been visiting the Shi'ite holy sites in al-Najaf and Karbalaa in the south of Iraq, where lie the shrines of the first and fourth Shi'ite Imams (Ali and al-Hussein).

A visit to Iran by Iraqi Transport Minister Ahmed Murtadha Ahmed led to agreements for opening Iraqi air-space for Iranian airlines en route to Syria. Previous agreements had been reached for opening a rail transport and transit corridor from Iran to Iraq and Syria. This would link Central Asian and Russian railway networks to West Asia and the Arab world, as part of the New Silk Road economic cooperation strategy.

Another important outcome of Foreign Minister al-Hadithi's visit was an agreement on limiting the activities of militant opposition groups targetting each country from the

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other's territory. Since the beginning of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, Iraq has been hosting the Iranian Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MKO), which has been conducting terrorist attacks against Iranian border posts, and also mortar and car-bomb attacks against government offices in the Iranian capital, Tehran. Iran, in its turn, has been hosting the Iraqi militant Shia group, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). SCIRI has been named as one of the leading Trojan horses in the American Iraq Liberation Act, which aims to use Iraqi Shia and Kurdish groups to overthrow the Baghdad regime.

Ironically, although these groups maintain substantial forces in Iran and Iraq, both rely heavily on headquarters in London, for political and financial support. Reportedly, the MKO evacuated its main headquarters in the Iraqi capital in late February. In another sign of the change, SCIRI leader Ayatollah Mohammad Bakir al-Hakim told the *Christian Science Monitor* that "he doesn't want Washington's help." The paper also reported that "though courted for months by American diplomats to join in their effort to overthrow Mr. Hussein, Ayatollah al-Hakim—also commander of the 10,000-strong Badr Brigade militia—urges caution. The Afghan model of backing proxy forces, as the United States did against the Taliban late last year, does not apply to Iraq, al-Hakim says."

The report cites a "Pentagon option which includes a pincer operation toward Baghdad, with 50,000 American troops moving from the South with SCIRI's Shia Muslim guerrillas, and 50,000 more moving from the North with Kurdish fighters." Such plans are "very far-fetched" and a "bad idea," al-Hakim told the *Monitor*.

The Kurds have learned from false Anglo-American promises since the 1960s, and are, in their turn, more skeptical towards the stated American plans to overthrow Saddam. Massoud Barzani, leader of the largest Kurdish group, the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (PDK) in north Iraq, told al-Jazeera TV that "Kurds are not rebels-for-hire" and that the U.S. administration has not informed his group of any plans. He added, "There are certain forces which want to use the Kurdish issue for their own purposes, therefore, we are dealing with this issue very cautiously and reservedly." Barzani has repeatedly stated his policy of keeping open channels with Baghdad, and his demands for the creation of a federation within a united Iraq.

"We do hope to reach with the central government in Baghdad an agreement for a federal solution to the Kurdish question," Barzani said in an interview with the Lebanese daily *al-Mustaqbal* on Feb. 10. However, he noted that he did not make any change or progress in the position of the Iraqi government towards the Kurdish question.

The Kurdish PDK and the Shia SCIRI are the only serious military threats to the Iraqi Army in the case of an American operation against Iraq. As for the London-based "five-star cocktail-party" opposition group, the Iraqi Na-

tional Congress (INC), who are being promoted as the "Iraqi government in exile" by former CIA director James Woolsey and others, nobody in the region believes that they are anything serious.

Oil and Trade

Iraq's relationships with its other Arab neighbors have improved considerably over the last year, and Iraq has treated Arab countries favorably in terms of trade and economic agreements, making some of these countries, such as Egypt, Syria, and even Saudi Arabia, major trade partners within the UN "food-for-oil" agreement. Iraqi Trade Minister Muhammad Mahdi Saleh said in February that he expects total Egyptian exports to Iraq, by the end of the year, will reach \$3.5 billion. Saleh, who paid a visit recently to Cairo, said he and Egyptian Prime Minister Atif Ebeid had discussed all measures that help the flow of Egyptian exports to Iraq through the free-trade agreement signed by the two states in January 2001.

Syria ranks second among Arab states trading with Iraq, with an annual export volume of about \$1-1.5 billion. Saudi Arabia is increasing its trade volume with Iraq, with exports amounting to \$600 million; Saudi companies participated in the Baghdad Fair this year for the first time since the 1991 Gulf War. Jordan is partially dependent on its trade with Iraq, and on the flow of goods through Jordan to Iraq from the port of Aqaba has involved growing cooperation.

The Organization of the Arab League (OAL) has made some efforts to ease the tension between Iraq, and Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. OAL Secretary General Amr Mousa paid a visit to Iraq in January, the first since the Gulf War, and carried back a message from the Iraqi President to the Saudi and Kuwaiti governments. Iraq proposed to solve outstanding issues from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing war. Saudi Arabia welcomed the proposals; Kuwait immediately rejected them.

The Kuwaiti position concerns the other Arab countries, because Kuwait could be used for moves to provoke launching of the new war against Iraq.

The late-March Arab leaders' summit meeting in Beirut, Lebanon will be a decisive moment for the Arab states to unite their stances and solve the Iraqi issue politically, and to intervene against the Israeli Ariel Sharon government's real threat to stability and security in the region. However, this summit will be preceded by the much-publicized tour of U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney to the Middle East.

Cheney is expected to pressure the states of the region regarding a potential U.S. attack on Iraq. The Anglo-American mass media are trying to give the impression that the attack on Iraq is inevitable, no matter what Europe or the region does. This discourages Arab leaders from discussing the feasibility of such a war, with Cheney, rather than simply signing up their contribution to it. Such a situation is insane for the Arab states—not to mention the world more broadly—unless they can find among themselves, a way out of it.