

Is Iran Being Set Up?

Safe from Attack? or Doomed After Next 9/11?

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A recent article by [Juan Cole](#) depicts Iran as the real victor in the Iraq War. This is because Iran, which Washington officially designates “evil,” has been able to establish warm relations with the government ushered into power by U.S. occupation forces in neighboring Iraq.

In his state visit to Iran Prime Minister al-Jaafari was offered electricity, wheat, pipeline projects, use of Iranian ports to transship goods to Iraq. Jaafari paid a pilgrimage to the tomb of Ayatollah Khomeini, one of the most vilified characters in the history of U.S. foreign relations. He blamed the Iran-Iraq War (in which the U.S. backed Baghdad) on Saddam Hussein and accepted Iraqi culpability. He promised that Iraq would not allow any attack on Iran from its soil.

Reports about the recent flurry of Iran-Iraq diplomacy must shock the neocons. Things are not going at all according to plan. Neocon ally Chalabi should be in power, hosting the Israeli prime minister’s official visit and mapping a common strategy against Iran. Just 30,000 U.S. soldiers should be in Iraq, living on permanent bases. The privatized oil industry should be paying for the nearly completed reconstruction of the country. Instead, devout Shiites who revere Khomeini are in power, Iraq is far from recognizing Israel, 130,000 U.S. forces are bogged down in a guerrilla war, the oil industry hasn’t recovered to pre-2001 levels, and the costs of the war and reconstruction fall on the American taxpayer. No, this is not at all what the neocons expected.

Not anticipating that Iraqi Shiites would either turn on their “liberators” or feel sympathy towards Iran (with which Iraq fought a long very bloody war in the 1980s), the neocons instead expected (or at least, publicly stated that they expected) a welcoming population that would submit to something like the U.S. occupation of Japan (1945-52). L. Paul Bremer III, heading the “Coalition Provisional Authority” in Iraq, said in June 2003 that while the occupation imposed “no blanket prohibition” against Iraqi self-rule, and he wasn’t personally “opposed to it,” it had to occur in “a way that takes care of our concerns. Elections that are held too early can be destructive. It’s got to be done very carefully” (*Washington Post*, June 28, 2003). The January 2005 election was held not because the U.S. came with a plan to quickly establish an Iraqi democracy, but because Shiite demonstrators rallied by Ayatollah Sistani demanded both an end to the occupation and free elections early on.

Huge demonstrations in early 2004 forced the U.S. to agree to officially “turn over authority” to an interim Iraqi government that summer and hold elections for a new administration in January 2005. Chalabi, fallen from favor in May 2004 due to charges of espionage, was replaced by Iyad Allawi (another CIA operative) as the leader favored by the U.S.; he was

appointed prime minister June 1, 2004. He remained the favorite in January 2005, and his party apparently got several times his expected vote due after receiving U.S. funds, advice and maybe stuffed ballot boxes. But the lion's share of the vote (quite a lot lower than expected, suggesting lots of fraud) went to the SCIRI and Dawa religious-based parties. After ages and ages of behind-the-scenes negotiations, the present administration under Jaafari was finally announced in April. Quite contrary to U.S. intentions, it has turned out to be markedly pro-Iranian.

Cole concludes with the observation, "The ongoing chaos in Iraq has made it impossible for Bush administration hawks to carry out their long-held dream of overthrowing the Iranian regime, or even of forcing it to end its nuclear ambitions." He implies that both because the U.S. is militarily overextended and because the Iraqi authorities will not approve an attack from their soil. I do want to believe all that! I also want to believe that, following the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's advice, the governments of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan will request the removal of U.S. bases from their territory. The local rulers of these former Soviet republics in Central Asia were willing to help out against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan but now seem anxious about U.S. use of their soil for an attack on Iran. Russia is heavily invested in Iran's nuclear industry, while China needs its petroleum.

But the U.S. is applying pressure. Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said "It looks to me like two very large countries were trying to bully some smaller countries." Rumsfeld has echoed that, stressing that the U.S. makes agreements with nations, not the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Yesterday Rumsfeld was back in Kyrgyzstan, suddenly, for the second time in four months, obviously concerned about the issue of Manas Air Base. Newly elected president Kurmanbek S. Bakiyev, who while campaigning for office called for an end to the U.S. presence, says his government will "do its best to avoid spoiling relations with Washington." In any case, the U.S. presence in Azerbaijan (not a SCO nation) may be important for war making purposes. Scott Ritter [wrote last month](#) that in "Azerbaijan, the US military is preparing a base of operations for a massive military presence that will foretell a major land-based campaign designed to capture Tehran."

Meanwhile, my pessimism deepens as I read an online excerpt from an article by Philip Giraldi, in the [American Conservative](#). It indicates that:

(1) the U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) has been asked to draw up concrete, short term contingency plans for an attack on Iran, to involve "a large-scale air assault employing both conventional and tactical nuclear weapons" and

(2) that Vice President Cheney's office has specifically told the Pentagon that the military should be prepared for an attack on Iran in the immediate aftermath of "another 9-11." That's "not conditional on Iran actually being involved in the act of terrorism directed against the United States," notes Giraldi.

Can it get madder than this? The neocons' plans for a total reorganization of the "Greater Middle East" have been plain for some time now. Many have been warning against the prospect of an expansion of the Iraq War into Syria and Iran. You'd think that reality would smack these guys in the face and they'd call off anything so stupid. But they apparently

think that by using conventional and nuclear weapons (first time any nation will do that since Nagasaki); by employing the Mujahadeen Khalq; by activating agents in place to organize demonstrations (as the CIA did so successfully in Iraq in 1953); by attacking from Azerbaijan they can actually pull this off. Do they even realize that southern Iraq and Iran constitute the heartland of historical Shiism, and that an attack on Iran will negate any goodwill among Shiites U.S. forces have acquired in Iraq?

Maybe, here and there within the military itself, the madmen meet with quiet resistance. "Several senior Air Force officers involved in the planning," writes Giraldi, "are reportedly appalled at the implications of what they are doing—that Iran is being set up for an unprovoked nuclear attack" That's encouraging, surely. Good that senior Air Force officers should be appalled at their orders. Surely they must ask questions, such as:

What do they mean by "another 9-11"? Could any, even small-time terrorist act in the U.S. (say, killing 52 in the Boston subway) be the signal for us to start bombing Iran?

Does the Vice President's office anticipate this second 9-11 sometime soon?

Would it be moral to attack Iran in the aftermath of a terrorist attack if Iran had nothing to do with it?

Actually, why would Iran ever give the U.S. pretext for an attack?

Am I going to be complicit in war crimes if I'm involved in this planned attack? What will this do for my long-term reputation?

Will our troops in Iraq suffer as a result of the hatred for the U.S. another unprovoked attack is likely to generate?

Am I going to be a part of a military project which will have no support anywhere in the world, except maybe in Israel?

But the sentence finishes "—but no one is prepared to damage his career by posing any objections."

That could change quickly, of course, if the Bush administration starts to sink under the weight of accumulating scandals. But the plan for the Iran attack is for it to come quickly, while the nation is in a state of shock—apparently in some *near-future* scenario—so that all those brewing scandals get placed on the back burners. The propaganda set-up's already been performed as well as possible. There's a list of charges against Iran, just like there was against Iraq. If they happen, President Bush will explain the Iran attacks as strikes reluctantly undertaken, as a last resort, to protect Americans from terrorist threats emanating out of Iran. The STRATCOM guys will know that's not true, and have to live with the knowledge.

Or else they can do what some have apparently done so far: speak out, if anonymously, and just maybe force their commanders to abort this criminal war against Iran.

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