



## Middle East

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# Iraq leads the Arabs against 'Islamic pact'

by Judith Wyer

Last week Iraqi President Saddam Hussein conducted a series of strategy planning sessions with the prime ministers of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan's King Hussein and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat. Baghdad in recent months has become the rallying point for an alliance to challenge London and Washington's effort to create an Islamic military pact as an arm of NATO against the Soviet Union.

The meetings in Baghdad coincided with the first open British declaration of its intentions to forge the Mideast Islamic pact. Following talks with President Carter, Britain's Foreign Minister Lord Carrington told the Washington press that London and Washington were concerned with the "urgent problem" of working out a "defensive arrangement to prevent Soviet domination of the Persian Gulf oil region" with the cooperation of West Europe, and the nations of the Gulf including Iran.

The Anglo-American elite intends to forge this pact on the basis of the Camp David Alliance of Egypt and Israel, on the one hand, and the Iranian Islamic regime of Ayatollah Khomeini. Egypt and Iran are widely recognized in the Arab world as the centers of the clandestine Muslim Brotherhood movement which is the prime vehicle for spreading Muslim fanaticism throughout the region. The process of Islamicization of the region is London's key bludgeon against moderate Arab countries like Iraq and Saudi Arabia opposed to Carrington's plan.

Baghdad and its continental European allies recognize that such a radical Islamicization of the Mideast represents a strategic threat to the Soviet Union, which has publicly declared that the U.S. and Britain are behind the Muslim insurgents. They recognize that further destabilization of the area by the Muslim Brotherhood may well be the shortest fuse to World War III. It is for this reason that Iraq and its Arab allies in cooperation with France are working to forge an independent Middle East peace plan and accompanying security arrangement.

France has become the major western power aiding Iraq and Saudi Arabia. France has concluded \$3.3 billion in military agreements with Saudi Arabia and Iraq. These contracts include the construction of naval and

training facilities for the two countries. France will also supply equipment for two armoured divisions in Saudi Arabia plus Mirage 4000 fighter jets. Last week, the head of the French national police, J. Soulier, arrived in Riyadh to advise the royal family on internal security. That same week French Defense Minister Yvon Bourges not only visited Saudi Arabia but conferred with the leaders of the Persian Gulf emirates Bahrain and Qatar to discuss French military aid.

These billions of dollars of French military contracts follow French President Giscard d'Estaing's historic trip to the Gulf this spring, where far-reaching economic and political agreements were reached. A key component of French efforts to build up an independent security capability in the Gulf is the close relationship between Iraq and India. Following Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's return to power this year, Giscard was the first world leader to visit New Delhi.

Paris has promoted the policy that Iraq and India should be the foundation of an alliance to safeguard the Indian Ocean from a potential superpower conflict. India and Iraq are both solid allies of the Soviet Union and France has more than any other European nation defied Washington by fighting to preserve its normal relations with Moscow. Just prior to France's announcement of the new military aid agreements with the Gulf states, Giscard held talks with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko.

That same week, Iran, India and France announced a far-reaching energy cooperation agreement including increased Iraqi oil supplies to both France and India plus sharing of nuclear technology. Iraq has pledged to increase its oil supplies to France from 25 million to 35 million tons this year and to increase its oil producing capacity to 4 million barrels a day this year.

Last month the Baghdad government stunned the world when it suddenly broke off relations with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP). This move was the latest example of the Saddam Hussein government's effort to shed Iraq's longstanding radical position in the Arab world. The

moderation of Iraqi policy has enabled Baghdad to assume a leading military role for the Arab world. The PFLP and the PDFLP are two of the most extreme groupings within the Palestinian movement, which are against any peace settlement with Israel. On the other hand, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the moderate PLO leadership allied to Yasser Arafat have adopted a policy of working with continental Europe to forge a firm diplomatic front to break the Camp David agreements, seeking an international consensus for an overall settlement of the Mideast crisis inclusive of the recognition of Palestinian rights. The PFLP and the PDFLP represent a security threat to the Arab nations of the Gulf not only by virtue of their hardline ideology but their alliance with the Islamic regime of Iran—which has pledged to export revolution to the Arabian peninsula—and their allegiance to the regime of Libya's Muammar Qaddafi.

Following Iraq's break with the PFLP and the PDFLP, Qaddafi lambasted Iraq for divorcing itself from the confrontationist policies of the so-called "rejection front." Qaddafi also attacked the Baghdad regime for its "hostile stand towards the Islamic Revolution in Iran."

Both Iranian and British propaganda have attempted to portray Iraq's new turn as a matter of the Hussein government becoming a pawn of Washington at the expense of relations with Moscow. Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Na'im Haddad during a visit to Kuwait last week told the press that "relations with the United States are hostile and relations with the Soviet Union are friendly, but at the same time, critical." The next day Saddam Hussein denounced the provocative U.S. military maneuvers off the coast of Cuba.

Iraq has been the most outspoken critic of the regime of Ayatollah Khomeini, condemning it as a stooge of the U.S. in its efforts to take over the oil resources of the Arab nations. Baghdad's Persian language broadcast last month again reiterated the links between Teheran and Washington, and noted that the problem of the American hostages is just a smokescreen: "The hostage problem is a smokescreen intentionally started by these two governments" to cover their covert relations. Radio Baghdad reports on a meeting between the Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait, Ardakani, and former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young. The report noted that "the amassing of U.S. troops at the mouth of the Gulf poses a direct threat to the Arab countries of the region, and not to Iran."

The British dailies, the *Financial Times* and the *Guardian* in recent days have caustically attacked the developing alliance which the French are cultivating with the states of the Gulf and has condemned Iraq for making a bid to become the central power of the region. What these attacks leave unstated is that Baghdad maintains a friendship treaty with Moscow which is seen in London and Washington as a serious obstacle to their Islamic defense pact.

## Iran

# President Bani-Sadr versus the Mullahs

by Nancy Coker

A behind-the-scenes power struggle is raging in Iran.

At the center of this struggle, whose outcome will determine not only the fate of the hostages but the very shape of the Middle East, is Iranian President Abolhasan Bani-Sadr. Known as a moderate because of his gestures over the past several months to defuse the hostage crisis, Bani-Sadr is operating as an appendage of the Anglo-American faction associated with British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington and former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. This faction is at odds with the confrontationist policies of National Security Council chief Zbigniew Brzezinski, whose eagerness to resort to military intervention in Iran is viewed correctly as a plunge into head-on collision with the Soviet Union.

Over the past several weeks, numerous editorials in the *Times of London* and other British outlets have endorsed Bani-Sadr and his up-to-now futile attempts to form a government. In throwing its weight behind Bani-Sadr and the moderates, the Vance-Carrington crew is pursuing a larger strategic objective that actually runs parallel to the Brzezinski track but stops just short of going to the brink of war. That objective is the forging of a new military alliance comprised of Iran, the Arab oil states, and the nations of the Persian Gulf, working in coordination with the West, all in the name of "preventing Soviet domination of the Gulf's oil supplies."

The problem facing the Vance-Carrington faction is that Bani-Sadr has no political base inside Iran. Moreover, with the fanatic clergy of the extremist Islamic Republican Party now in ascendance as a result of that party's victory in last week's parliamentary run-off, Bani-Sadr is incapable of creating a political base, and has little if any room for maneuvering. Insiders report that should he move at this time to release the U.S. hostages, who have become the rallying point of the entire nation the country will collapse.

On May 5, the *Village Voice* leaked that according to associates of Bani-Sadr, the U.S. raid on Iran in April was aimed at bringing about a coup d'état against Bani-Sadr by "leading clergy and government officials" including such extremists as Foreign Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, Ayatollah Beheshti of the Islamic Republican Party, Defense Minister Mustafa Chamran, and