

Is Southwest Asia Headed Toward ‘LaRouche Doctrine’?

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

If, as planned, a meeting takes place in Baghdad on March 10, of government officials from Iraq’s neighboring states, plus others, it will underscore the fact that ideas indeed do move history. For it is the idea of such an approach that is shaping the possibility of putting out the raging fires of sectarian strife in Iraq, which threaten to engulf the entire region. The idea was first formulated by Lyndon LaRouche in April 2004, in a proposal he dubbed “The LaRouche Doctrine.” In it, the Democratic political figure put forward, for the first time, the concept of a regional arrangement to end the Iraq war. LaRouche’s proposal stated, in part:

“To define a feasible solution, we must shift the agenda, from Iraq alone, to the subject of Southwest Asia as a whole. Only within an appropriate declaration of U.S. policy-interest in Southwest Asia as a coherently defined unit of U.S. policy-making, could we bring into play the concert of forces required to create a viable option for Iraq today.”

LaRouche’s proposal circulated widely in the United States, Europe, and the Arab and Islamic world, including through an extensive interview with LaRouche in *EIR*, which was covered in the Arabic press. The LaRouche Doctrine was the subject of media interviews in Iran, Egypt, and elsewhere, featuring collaborators of the American political figure. At every juncture, political and media representatives would object, however, that the idea would not go anywhere, unless there were support from the United States. LaRouche himself had emphasized in his report, that the security arrangement he sought could only work if the United States government were to endorse it.

It took two years for the concept to take hold, during which a hefty debate unfolded inside the United States and internationally, on how to deal with the deteriorating crisis in

Iraq. As a result of the Democratic Party victory in November 2006—itsself largely predicated on the demand by the American people to end the disastrous war, to settle the Israeli-Palestine conflict, and to prevent any future wars—institutional forces were enabled to put forward this approach as an alternative policy to the suicidal and genocidal course of the Bush-Cheney duo.

The form this took was the report issued in early December by the Iraq Study Group, also known as the Baker-Hamilton group, named after its leading sponsors, James Baker III and Lee Hamilton. Their report echoed the LaRouche Doctrine: it called for the creation of an “Iraq International Support Group,” to include all of Iraq’s neighbors, as well as key countries in the region and the world.

Although President George W. Bush, under the control of Dick Cheney, initially rejected the report and all its recommendations, political pressure continued to build inside the United States and abroad, to force a shift. Finally, on Feb. 28, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced that the United States would attend an international conference in Baghdad of Iraq’s neighbors, including representatives of Syria and Iran, which Bush had dubbed “rogue states.” The conference on March 10, is to be held at the subministerial level, that is, with ambassadors or deputy ministers participating. In addition to Iraq’s neighbors, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council are invited.

As of this writing, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Britain had assured their participation, while France and Russia were said to be studying it. China will probably attend. If all goes as planned, a second conference will follow in April, again in Baghdad, at the level of foreign ministers.

FIGURE 1
Southwest Asia



The four nations highlighted are those that Lyndon LaRouche specified, in his April 2004 “LaRouche Doctrine,” as those with which the United States should work to bring about an end to the strife in neighboring Iraq. Is the United States finally ready to take this step?

A Significant Shift

If the conference is to succeed, first Cheney must be prevented from sabotaging it. It is widely recognized that he advocates a new war through the launching of a Gulf of Tonkin-type provocation in the Gulf.

Second, the approach outlined in the LaRouche Doctrine and echoed in the Baker-Hamilton report, must be explicitly embraced. Most important is the establishment of a security arrangement among the regional players, endorsed by Washington, but independent of it, and geared towards a post-occupation situation of restored sovereignty for all nations. For this to function, the economic component is crucial, as only through a cooperative effort by the countries of the region, can the Iraqi economy be rebuilt. To tackle the most explosive aspect of the conflict, as it has emerged in the form of sectarian fighting, the weight of religious authorities must be brought to bear. Here the roles of Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as the highest religious authorities inside Iraq, are crucial.

U.S. politicians immediately hailed the announcement by Rice as a breakthrough. Democratic Sen. Chris Dodd of Connecticut, who had broken a taboo by visiting Syria in December, said it was “long overdue.” Republican Chuck Hagel echoed his views, saying that no regional settlement could be achieved without the participation of Syria and Iran. Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev), Sen. James Webb (D-Va.), and others

applauded the move. Press organs immediately praised the development as a “major shift” in U.S. foreign policy, something which White House spokesman Tony Snow explicitly denied. Snow added that no bilateral talks would take place between the United States and Syria or Iran, unless those governments caved in to the conditions posed by Washington for contacts.

Regardless of such denials, the fact that this conference is scheduled to occur, does signal a major shift. It comes amid continuing threats issued by Vice President Dick Cheney of military action against Iran, bolstered by an ominous buildup of U.S. naval forces in the region. And it comes as the result of massive pressures internationally and domestically, against the Bush-Cheney war policy. Although it would be folly to think that this war party has re-

linquished its aims, it is a fact that it has been boxed into a corner, forced to accept, at least formally, that a “diplomatic effort” be made to solve the region’s crises. At the same time, certain quarters among the occupying forces may be seeking to refocus a part of their military effort on Afghanistan, at least temporarily.

International Pressure

The Russian leadership has played a major role in getting this opening. As Lyndon LaRouche has emphasized, the speech delivered at the Wehrkunde security conference in Munich, Germany, by Russian President Vladimir Putin, denouncing U.S. pretensions to world hegemony, signalled a shift in Moscow’s public posture. Since then, not a day has gone by without an explicit statement by a member of the leadership—whether it be Putin, or Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, or Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, or UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin—to the effect that the Cheney faction is planning a war against Iran, and that Russia will “do everything possible” to make sure that it does not happen. Lavrov has cited Cheney as a warmonger by name, again and again. Although on a lower profile, and more moderate in tone, China’s leadership has also disavowed any military approach to Iran.

The parallel development which has contributed to forc-

ing the holding of the Baghdad conference, is the ongoing cooperation between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Although traditionally misportrayed in the international press as “Gulf rivals,” the two major powers in the region have been quietly, but systematically, coordinating moves to cool down tensions in the entire Southwest Asian region, seen as a whole. (See *EIR*, Feb. 9.) At least four high-level meetings have taken place, between Iranian nuclear negotiator and chief of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Larijani, and the Saudi leadership, up to the King himself. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited Saudi Arabia in early March for a summit with the King.

The thrust of Iran-Saudi cooperation has been to prevent a civil war among the Palestinians; prevent an escalation of tensions in Lebanon, which were also moving in the direction of civil war; and contribute to stabilizing the situation in Iraq, generally recognized as already in the throes of civil war.

The most dramatic achievement of this effort, was the agreement—the Mecca Accord—forged by King Abdallah personally, between the Hamas and Fatah Palestinian factions, for the creation of a government of national unity. The second achievement has been the relative calming of the Lebanon crisis. Most significantly, none other than Saad Hariri, son of the murdered Rafiq Hariri, and leader of the anti-Syrian, anti-Hezbollah front in Lebanon, on March 1 welcomed the efforts of Iran and Saudi Arabia to find a solution to the Lebanese crisis. Speaking together with European Union Foreign Policy chief Javier Solana in Brussels, Hariri said, “We wish, God willing, in the coming days the consultations between the two countries would lead to positive solutions inside Lebanon.” Iran is wielding its influence on Hezbollah, and Saudi Arabia is doing likewise on the Siniora government, to strike an agreement leading to the formation of a more representative government, i.e. with more participation by those parties currently in the opposition (Hezbollah and its allies in Michel Aoun’s Christian front).

Regional Cooperation

It was on the initiative of Iran that the neighbors’ conference was proposed to be held in Iraq itself. Syria and Iraq were the first to agree. In all these diplomatic contacts, the

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Russian side has been omnipresent: It was Russian President Putin who broke the taboo by inviting Hamas chief Khaled Meshaal to Moscow. After the Mecca Accord, Russia immediately called for the financial sanctions against the Palestinians to be lifted. Putin’s historic visit to Saudi Arabia, the first by a Russian President in 80 years, was another important step, while several government contacts have taken place between Moscow and Tehran, including visits by Larijani and former Foreign Minister Velayati to the Russian capital. On the Lebanese side, Prime Minister Siniora, as well as opposition figures, have been in touch with the Russians.

The political coordination between Riyadh and Tehran has not only produced relatively positive effects, as noted, but has also damaged the plot that Cheney had hatched, to recruit a Sunni-led “coalition of moderate Arabs” against the Shi’ites and, more generally, against “extremists” Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iran. Condi Rice has been deployed to pursue this track, most recently in her meeting with the intelligence chiefs of the so-called moderate states of the region. Integral to this plot has been the deployment of certain Saudi elements—personnel, finances, and logistics—in operations against Shi’ite forces.

The stories detailed in some press, of Saudi-backed operations against Hamas among the Palestinians, as well as Saudi weapons to radical Christian and other anti-Hezbollah factions in Lebanon, and Saudis arming radical Sunni resistance groups in Iraq, are not necessarily black propaganda. One has to recognize the severely factionalized landscape in Saudi Arabia, to grasp the truth. As Iranian and other regional sources have confirmed to *EIR*, the Saudis involved in such anti-Shi’a sectarian operations are elements of the Wahabi clergy, as well as tribal entities not directly under the control of the government. The ideology of these Wahabi radicals, as documented by Abbas Bakhtiar in a recent article, is not only anti-Shi’a, but ultimately anti-Islamic.

That said, the strategy embraced by Cheney and company for sectarian strife, is not limited to deployment of Saudi Wahabis. Iranian and Arab sources have reported to *EIR* on the increasing incidents of conflict inside Iran, involving ostensibly ethnic strife. Not only have ethnic Arabs been active in Khuzestan province, with terrorist attacks including the killing of Revolutionary Guard units, but on March 1, Kurdish rebels engaged in armed conflict with Revolutionary Guards near the Turkish border, resulting in casualties on both sides. Iran announced it would reserve the right to enter Iraqi territory in hot pursuit of such terrorist elements, if required. This is something the Turks have also threatened, if the PKK Kurdish terrorists, under the protection of the U.S. occupying forces there, are not reined in.

To stave off these and other operations, it is all the more necessary that the governments of the region engage in a coordinated effort to solve the single political crises and destabilizations, as part of a regional package. Such should be the approach taken at the upcoming Baghdad conference.