

Saudi Diplomat Rejects Iraq War, Ridicules Rand Corp. Provocation

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

It is widely known that extensive plans are on the drawing boards of geopolitical strategists in Washington, for redrawing the map of the Persian Gulf and Middle East. Numerous scenarios for the upcoming Iraq war, replete with maps of invading armies, have been floated in the press; President Bush has recently announced that he is for “regime change” in Tehran, as well as Baghdad; and Saudi Arabia, once the staunchest Arab ally of the United States, has been labelled “the enemy” by a Rand Corp. analyst at a Pentagon briefing.

If chaos and destabilization are the name of the game, important players in the Middle East have announced that they will not play. Recent developments point in a diametrically opposite direction: Powerful regional forces, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as the Arab League, are taking all possible steps to thwart the war.

Opposition to a U.S. attack against Iraq, which has been growing in the region, reached a highpoint on Aug. 4, when Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal travelled to Tehran, and there issued a joint statement with the Iranians against any attack.

In an interview with Associated Press on Aug. 7, Prince Saud explicitly ruled out the use of Saudi territory for the planned war: “We have told them we don’t [want] them to use Saudi ground. We are against any attack on Iraq because we believe it is not needed, especially now that Iraq is moving to implement United Nations resolutions.” In following days, he reiterated this stance several times.

On Aug. 13, the Secretary General of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, stated in Morocco that *every* member of the Arab League opposed any military action against Iraq, and that the organization, representing 22 countries, was launching an initiative to arrange a formula for returning UN inspectors to Iraq, to eliminate the pretext for war.

The Special Case of Saudi Opposition

The Tehran Saudi-Iranian meeting occurred on Aug. 4. Two days later, the *Washington Post* published a widely circulated leak, of a briefing presented to Richard Perle’s Defense Policy Board, which defined Saudi Arabia as “the enemy.” The briefing had taken place July 10, almost one month earlier. Why did the leak occur on Aug. 6? Among others, a Lebanese paper, *Al Mustaqbal*, mooted that it was a direct

response to the Saudi-Iranian joint commitment against the war, and, more broadly, to the shift in the direction of a vast regional opposition.

The Saudi response to this Pentagon briefing came in a barrage of press articles, which pointed an accusing finger, surprisingly, at “growing Christian fundamentalism” inside the United States. *Al-Watan* wrote: “Christian fundamentalism is no less dangerous to international peace and security than extremists in other religions. Rather it is more dangerous, especially if it controls the policy of the United States.” The *Saudi Gazette* stated: “The Christian fundamentalists are encouraging American militants to raise a dust of hatred about Saudi Arabia that has been maintaining an exemplary relationship with the United States.” And, with reference to the Defense Policy Board briefing per se, the *Gazette* wrote: “The Saudis value their friendship with the U.S., but they do not accept such trash.”

Prince Saud al-Faisal dismissed the briefing, given by Laurent Murawiec (who had once been a member of the LaRouche movement, but dropped out in 1990; see preceding article), as “ridiculous.” In an interview with Sam Donaldson and Cokie Roberts on ABC News on Aug. 11, Prince Saud made three decisive points, each of which destabilizes those hankering for war. First, he confirmed that Saudi Arabia had received 16 al-Qaeda suspects, who had sought refuge in Iran, been identified by the Iranian authorities, and turned over to the Saudi government in Riyadh on request. He explained that the suspects were in jail, being interrogated, and would be freed if innocent; jailed, if not. Asked what the point was, Prince Saud responded: “I’m not trying to make any point. I am just explaining the facts that exist here, that Iran cooperated with us in handling these prisoners.” Whether or not this would lead to a softening of the U.S. stance on Iran, he said, that was a matter of bilateral relations between the two. “But,” he added, “it seems to me [Iran’s] cooperation with us has been very important and very significant in fighting this terrorism.”

The second point dealt with the war against Iraq. Roberts asked: “And in talking about cooperation with Saudi Arabia, of course one of the areas that is foremost in the minds of many Americans is the question of attacking Iraq. And you have been quoted as saying that you don’t want U.S. troops

using Saudi soil to stage their attacks on Iraq. Is that the case?" And later, more bluntly, she asked, if the United States goes to war, "can this country put troops on your soil?"

To which the Saudi Foreign Minister responded, "Well, under the present circumstances, and with no proof that there is a threat imminent from Iraq, I don't think Saudi Arabia will join in . . . the war. No, I don't." The Kingdown will not allow its territory to be the launching pad for a U.S. attack.

'The Dog Who Didn't Bark'

The third point raised related to the infamous Defense Policy Board briefing itself. Roberts noted that although the administration had disavowed the policy enunciated by Rand's Murawiec, many people in Washington were reassessing U.S.-Saudi relations. The response of Prince Saud was unexpected: "Well," he started, "this is a report made by somebody who is considered even outlandish to Mr. LaRouche. So I don't assume that what he said will be taken seriously. The only interesting fact is that it was brought to the attention of so high a committee as the Advisory Committee for the Department of Defense. That is the only curious thing about the affair."

When Roberts pressed that many institutes and publications had accused the Saudis of supporting suicide bombers, etc., Prince Saud had recourse to a metaphor: "Isn't it curious that these facts, presumed facts, come from study groups and think-tanks, rather than from the administration? I think if there is anything that the President has shown himself adamantly against, it was these criminals who are terrorizing the international community including Saudi Arabia. How come the administration is not accusing Saudi Arabia of these things? Here it reminds me of a story of Sherlock Holmes where . . . he was constantly asking—Sherlock Holmes—'The dog didn't bark? The dog didn't bark?' And people were curious because, they said, people usually ask, 'Why is the dog barking or not barking?' Well, Mr. Laurent—I don't know what his second name is—has barked about these things. What is worrying us, is those dogs that haven't barked. And the interest in the story of Sherlock Holmes is, of course, [that] the dog didn't bark because the perpetrator of the crime was inside the house, not outside the house."

The interviewer gasped: "And does that—what does that mean? Does that mean the perpetrator of the crime is inside the White House? Inside the Saudi establishment? What does that mean?" Prince replied, "We're asking what Mr. Laurent has said—has been giving to the committee—which was the largest advisory committee to the Department of Defense. But we only heard one voice from that committee, which was Dr. Kissinger, who came out against this study. . . . *But we haven't heard from the rest.*"

Any intelligent viewer would grasp the importance of Prince Saud's conversation. He undermined the credibility of U.S. claims against Iran, while reconfirming his country's cooperation with Tehran; he again said no to the war; and he

raised the relevant question, provoked by the Defense Policy Board story: Is this the policy of that committee? Who in Washington adheres to it? Why haven't they been fired?

The LaRouche Factor

It cannot have gone unnoticed that Saud al-Faisal, brought up Lyndon LaRouche, who had denounced Murawiec's nonsense—the Prince knew what LaRouche had said, and what his publications had printed on the matter (see *EIR*, Aug. 16). LaRouche, not coincidentally, appeared in major Saudi press organs in the days immediately thereafter. On Aug. 12, the leading, internationally distributed Saudi daily, *Asharq al-Awsat*, ran a piece by Iqbal al-Qazwini, on LaRouche's Eurasian Land-Bridge strategy; *Al-Watan*, one of the largest national dailies inside Saudi Arabia, ran "Conversations With Lyndon LaRouche on the Most Dangerous Issues of the World"; and *Al-Watan* published an *EIR* article on LaRouche's assessment of Defense Policy Board head Richard Perle's frustrations with those U.S. military layers opposing the Iraq war.

No one in Washington or anywhere else could miss the point of the extensive Saudi coverage of LaRouche, precisely at that juncture. A senior foreign policy expert in Moscow spoke to *EIR* about it on Aug. 14. The laudatory articles in the Saudi press, he said, reflect the Saudis' understanding that LaRouche is an important factional opponent, inside the United States, of the "war party" within the Bush Administration.

"This positive coverage of Mr. and Mrs. LaRouche, has a lot to do with the growing tensions between the Saudis, and powerful elements in the Bush Administration, typified by Donald Rumsfeld," he said. "The Saudis know very well what Mr. LaRouche represents. I see this as a negative message to Rumsfeld, and others who are supporting the attack on Iraq." From this standpoint, he emphasized that the Saudis view the Murawiec/Rand provocation as more a function of "ongoing fights in the National Security Council and Pentagon," than as an immediate threat to the Saudi Kingdom.

The Russian strategist emphasized that the Saudis are now in the midst of a significant series of policy moves, reconciling with both Iraq and Iran, as part of a broader process of reconciliation within the Arab and Islamic worlds. Further, "You have to understand, there is a collapse of the foreign policy of the American Administration, that is now ongoing. The price for an attack on Iraq is growing every day, and I really wonder whether Bush will dare do it. Our information in Moscow, is that if the Americans strike at Iraq, Colin Powell will resign, and this will be a severe blow to the administration. Our reading is also, that Bush will never dare to attack Iraq, without the permission of the Congress, at a time when the Democrats could well be victorious in the November mid-term elections."

The word in Washington should be: "Back to the drawing boards!"