

The Coming War on Iraq Will Not Be Desert Storm II

by Muriel Mirak-Wiessbach

The United States' planned war against Iraq is being devised with as little regard for its immediate, near- and long-term consequences, as was the now-increasingly uncomfortable war against Afghanistan's Taliban regime. The neo-conservative "utopian" lunatics who are the leading promoters and strategists of the Iraqi war, within the Bush Administration, are proceeding from the delusion, that a war against Iraq will be, in the words of Defense Policy Board chairman Richard Perle, "a cakewalk."

This is a phantasm that even traditionalists within the U.S. uniformed services—the men and women who would have to command a war on Iraq—see as madness. On March 20, Adm. Dennis Blair, the Commander of the Pacific Command, and Air Force Gen. Joseph W. Ralston, Commander of the European Command, both told the House Armed Services Committee that the United States does not have "adequate forces to carry out our missions." They emphasized that even the ongoing operations in Afghanistan, not expected to end soon, are taxing their resources, and any large-scale military operation against Iraq would create impossible strains worldwide.

But such voices are unlikely to stand against the intensity with which the "war party" inside the Washington Beltway demands an Iraq war.

The authors of this "Get Saddam" frenzy are ignoring the fundamental fact, that the world economic-financial situation, the political dynamic, and the psychological condition of the peoples involved, is completely different from what it was 12 years ago, when American forces led Operation Desert Storm. And most of the ostensible "opponents" of the Iraq war-drive are also stuck in a fishbowl view of the present strategic conjuncture, which undermines their ability to competently oppose the increasingly dominant demands of lunatics like Perle, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul

Wolfowitz, and Senators Joe Lieberman (D-Ct.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.).

The LaRouche Factor

It is for this reason that leading Arab and Muslim politicians are turning, in growing numbers, to Lyndon LaRouche, for leadership in the effort to defeat the insanity. LaRouche is the only leading American political voice who has openly called Ariel Sharon and the Israeli Defense Forces' genocide against the Palestinians for what it is: A Hitlerian "final solution," modelled explicitly on the Nazi extermination of the Warsaw Ghetto.

A statement by LaRouche, issued by his LaRouche in 2004 Presidential campaign committee, is circulating all throughout the United States, and is also circulating, in Arabic, among leading politicians and journalists throughout the Middle East, detailing Sharon and the IDF's Nazi-like policies, and pressing for the expanded resistance to this genocide from within Israel.

A Diagnosis of the War Lunacy

LaRouche has also pinpointed the reason for the mad Iraq war-drive, coming from Anglo-American financial circles, and has spelled out the kind of global financial reorganization and economic recovery, needed to have an effective war-avoidance policy. Financial collapse is a "monkey wrench" which may stop the war drive—although, ironically, the fear of that collapse is motivating the demands for more and more war-fighting. The outcome depends on backing for LaRouche's role.

While prominent political military figures, from the Arab world, Europe, Russia and China, have warned that attacking Iraq now could unleash uncontrollable processes—an "Armageddon," as Jordan's King Abdullah II put it—the "uto-



What the United States and Britain unleash this time by attacking Iraq, with or without nuclear weapons, is not to be contained by bio-chemical gear and other high-tech preparations for the desert, as in 1991.

pian” military strategists continue to consider only options and strategies that will lead to doom.

The most common objection to a proposed war, as reiterated by one Arab leader after another to Vice President Cheney on his March 11-20 tour of the Middle East, is that it will “destabilize the entire region,” and its governments. But understandably, not one of these leaders has outlined in detail what this actually means. What this fact sheet presents, is a step-by-step consideration, of what the war against Iraq could indeed signify: first, the military options; second, the consequences of these options on the region; and third, the medium- and long-term implications—unless the LaRouche solution is adopted by governments around the world, including the Bush Administration in Washington.

The Military Options

Three basic options are under discussion. The first is a military, or “palace” coup, to remove Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. This would require the participation of elements of the Iraqi military, as well as members of the many well-organized secret services, backed up by U.S. “special operations units.” It would also require the existence of an alternative political and military leadership. Current plans indicate that the United States is grooming former Iraqi military leaders, like Brig. Gen. Najib al Salihi, and a number of factions from the widely divergent Iraqi opposition groups, including the Iraqi National Congress (INC). A conference of the political and military opposition has been planned for late March, near Washington, D.C. by the INC, and endorsed by sectors of the U.S. government.

None of the candidates for replacing Saddam Hussein, enjoys the support of the Iraqi population. A number of them face prosecution on war-crimes charges themselves, stem-

ming from the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, or financial corruption charges. The INC is considered, in every capital of the region, to be a “joke.”

A second option is the “Afghanistan II” scenario. Here, the United States would conduct a massive aerial bombardment campaign, at the same time as ground forces—an Iraqi “Northern Alliance” equivalent—would march on the capital, Baghdad. The forces under consideration, are the Kurdish forces, located in northern Iraq, in the northern “no fly zone” declared by the U.S. and British Air Forces. The Kurdish forces are estimated at 40,000, and they control an area inhabited by 4 million people. Another possible contingent for ground forces, would be the Shi’ites, whose political and military leadership is based in Iran, in the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI).

The third option involves a massive invasion by American (and allied) ground forces, again under the cover of massive aerial bombardments. As retired Gen. Wesley Clark has said, this would require 250,000 troops. Geographically, the invading armies could enter Iraq from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, or Turkey.

But Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah stated, at the time of Vice President Cheney’s visit to his country, that his government would not allow Saudi territory to be used as a base of military operations against Iraq. It was reported in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of March 20, that in talks with Turkish Chief of Staff Kivrikoglu, Cheney was informed that the Turkish military would allow the use of bases and air space, but not the deployment of troops or tanks.

Implications for the Region

The immediate danger for Iraq, in the event of any of the three military options, is that the country itself could be bro-

ken up into three parts: the Kurdish North, the Sunni heartland, and the South, predominantly Shi'ite. An unsuccessful coup would destabilize the country, and lead to possible uprisings in the North and South. A "successful" coup, which imposed a regime subservient to Washington and London, would not meet with popular support; this could also trigger social upheavals. A massive land invasion could meet with serious resistance, unlike that of 1991, with heavy casualties on all sides, and would lead to prolonged war.

This is what prompted Jordanian King Abdullah II, in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* March 17, to say it would be "an Armageddon in the Middle East." He said, "A strike against Iraq, the potential fragmentation of Iraq, the potential nightmare of a civil war as a result of an American strike, is something that I don't think the region can handle."

In the North, were the country to be fragmented, or the Kurds mobilized as part of an opposition assault against the central government, an independent Kurdish entity could come into being. NATO member Turkey, which hosts a population of 12 million Kurds, would be threatened by the eruption of Kurdish insurrectionists outside and inside its borders. The only possible Turkish response would be massive repression, followed, perhaps, by actual occupation of territory which was once part of Turkey. It has been mooted in some circles, that the U.S. has in fact offered Turkey the prospect of taking over a chunk of Iraqi territory—which would imply the elimination of the Kurds. Even without activation of the Kurdish element, Turkey, whose economy has been on the brink of breakdown collapse, would be dealt the death blow by a war against Iraq, which would immediately cut off the Iraqi trade vital to it.

Leaders of the two major Kurdish parties in northern Iraq, Jalal Talebani of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), and Mustafa Barzani, of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), are opposed to war. Asked by Pierre Scholl-Latour of *Welt am Sonntag*, whether the "rebellious Kurds of northern Iraq, comparable to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, would offer themselves as allies and march on Baghdad," Talebani replied, "We are not mercenaries . . . and one should be careful not to compare Mesopotamia with Hindu Kush."

The two party leaders have reportedly made known their position in a letter to President Bush. According to a PUK representative in Berlin, Ahmad Berwari, the Kurds' demands include guarantees for their current autonomous status, and protection for the civilian population, hardly feasible in a state of war. Furthermore, the trade route from Iraq to Turkey, through the Kurdish autonomous area, would be disrupted by war, thus depriving the Kurds of their livelihood. It is estimated that the Kurds receive 13.5% of the Iraqi oil exports through their region.

According to a report in the Saudi daily, *Al Hayat*, Cheney assured both Kurdish leaders that the United States would guarantee the territorial integrity of the Kurdish area, as well

as their oil revenues. Finally, the Kurdish parties are opposed to a military coup d'état against Saddam Hussein.

Were the war party to attempt to mobilize the "Shi'ite" opposition to Saddam Hussein, in the south, this would also fuel fragmentation and civil war. The main Iraqi Shi'ite organization, the SCIRI, is also refusing being used as a pawn in the game. Its clerical leader told the London *Guardian* on March 18, "We don't agree with an American attack." He said the Iraqi people should and could deal with their own problems, and that he opposed any outside military assault. As part of their own ongoing rapprochement process, Iraq and Iran have agreed to prevent opposition groups on their soil from attacking the other. This means Iran should rein in the SCIRI, as Iraq neutralizes the Iranian opposition group, Mujaheddin al Khalq (MKO) based on its territory.

However, according to a leading British Middle East expert, if there is "the idea of moving in from Kuwait, and establishing a southern redoubt, all the way up to near Baghdad, . . . then, even if they are currently opposing a war, the . . . SCIRI Shi'ite opposition *might* join in." He added, "then the Iraqi regime and armed forces would have to concentrate themselves in the Sunni heartland, and it would be very difficult for the Americans to eradicate them."

Iran and Iraq

Whatever the ultimate posture of the SCIRI, a civil war in Iraq would have immediate repercussions on Iran: Although the government has stated it would not support an attack against Iraq, and would provide humanitarian aid, certain ultra-conservative forces in Iran could entertain the option of entering Iraq, with the perspective of partitioning off a piece. This would unleash conflict inside Iran as well. In any case, floods of Iraqi refugees will stream into Iran.

This has been acknowledged by the United Nations, which is already helping Iran prepare for a massive influx, supplying of tens of thousands of tents and blankets. The "contingency plan," according to UN office chief in Tehran, Pierre Lavanchy, involves preparations being made now to accommodate 40,000 refugees, but up to 150,000 are expected. One million refugees entered Iran during Desert Storm. Iran, which now hosts 2.5 million Afghan refugees, would be stretched to the limit.

The most violent response to an American attack on Iraq, would come in the form of escalated conflict between the Palestinians and Israel. Although in 1990-91, the expected Palestinian uprising did not occur, now there is already a de facto state of war, acknowledged as such by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and unprecedented levels of anger among the Palestinian population, against Israel and the United States, not to be contained by assurances, or paper agreements brokered by U.S. special envoy Gen. Anthony Zinni.

Iraq has supported the Palestinian cause for decades, and,

since the Intifada began in September 2000, has been a leading financial and political backer. Iraq has organized a new volunteer military formation, called the Al Qods (Jerusalem) brigade, for possible deployment. Whatever its military strength might be, its existence is of high symbolic value to Palestinians. Udo Steinbach, director of the Orient Institute in Hamburg, told *Bild am Sonntag* on March 17, "A war against Iraq would have unforeseeable consequences in the Middle East conflict. . . . Arab countries could fight alongside Palestinians against Israel"; in short, a regional Arab-Israeli war would ensue.

In this event, if Ariel Sharon's long-term policy, to expel the Palestinians into Jordan, were implemented, the Hashemite Kingdom could be threatened with political upheavals.

The huge Palestinian refugee communities in Lebanon and Jordan would also react. In Lebanon, a further complicating factor, is a section of the militantly anti-Syrian Christian forces; seeing Syria weakened and destabilized by an attack on Iraq, these forces—with or without coordinated support from Israel—would raise demands that the Syrian forces be expelled from Lebanon, which could ignite civil war.

A Nuclear War?

The two other Arab countries to be affected domestically by a war against Iraq, are Jordan and Egypt. The majority of Jordan's population is Palestinian, and has historically expressed active solidarity with Iraq. Tens of thousands of Palestinians entered Jordan as refugees during Desert Storm, from Saudi Arabia, Iraq and other countries. The potential for massive uprisings in the Hashemite Kingdom, can be seen in demonstrations that have taken place during March. Although the demonstrations were formally called to protest Israeli aggression against Palestinians, the social layers involved are those politically sympathetic with Iraq. In Amman, the capital of Jordan, on March 15, reportedly 10-15,000 marched from the Professional Associations building toward the UN offices, demanding that the government shut down the Israeli embassy. On March 16, thousands of Palestinians at Baqa'a refugee camp near Amman, the second largest in the region, demonstrated against Israeli atrocities.

In addition, an Iraq war would immediately stop the flow of oil from Iraq to Jordan. As the Jordanian foreign minister has pointed out, Jordan would have to import the oil from an alternative source, and pay \$500 million for it, funds which it does not have. The more general interruption of trade between Iraq and Jordan would devastate the economy of the Hashemite Kingdom, which is already teetering on the brink. Although U.S. financial compensation, promised for such losses, may persuade governments to comply, they will have little or no effect on the population, whose rage level has been steadily rising.

In Egypt, political convulsions would accompany economic disruptions. In Cairo, March 16, thousands of Egyptian students marched in solidarity with the Palestinians, some

calling for the government to allow them to travel to the Palestinian territories, to conduct a "jihad" against Israel. The "street" in both Egypt and Jordan is fully behind Iraq, and would seriously threaten the stability of both governments, in the event of war. The Egyptian population's anti-Americanism has increased exponentially over the past decade. Saudi Arabia, though different, would not be immune to similar eruptions.

A final consideration of the regional consequences must include speculation, as to what the American response could be, in the foreseeable event that neither the coup d'état, nor the "Afghanistan II" option, nor the ground invasion were to succeed; or in the possible event that Iraq would respond with unconventional means.

In his March 13 press conference, President Bush said, "all options are on the table," including nuclear weapons, and added, "one thing I will not allow is a nation such as Iraq to threaten our very future by developing weapons of mass destruction." On March 20, British Defense Secretary Hoon made the same threat; the possibility is very real.

The Longer-Term Implications

The economic effects of the war should not be overlooked. Operators on the stock markets, currently preoccupied with the illusion of an economic recovery, will be caught unawares by the sharp drop in equity prices which the onset of war will cause. The subsequent rise in oil prices could be accompanied by a rise in the value of the dollar, vis-à-vis the yen, which, in turn, would adversely affect the debt of East Asian countries. More generally, any increase in the oil price, to be expected in the event of war, would have a far more dramatic impact today than during Desert Storm, as the entire world economy is in the throes of a systemic breakdown crisis.

Politically, an attack against Iraq would put a swift end to the "anti-terrorism coalition." The overall consequences more broadly, were summed up by a leading British Middle East expert, as follows: "It would be a confirmation in the Arab world, about the reality of American policy in the Middle East. . . . It would be a general confirmation throughout the developing world, that the United States has decided to act strictly as an imperial power."

In the longer term, European-American splits will deepen, and NATO will disappear, except only as a European army. "Most important," the same British expert stressed, "in consequence of the disaffection with the West, terrorism will greatly increase." In fact, a war against Iraq would be the most effective incentive for recruitment to the al-Qaeda and other terrorist networks, which would launch anti-American attacks over an extended period of time.

Finally, the war against Iraq would catalyze anti-American ferment throughout the Islamic world, thus unleashing the Clash of Civilizations process outlined by geopolitical strategists like Samuel Huntington, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Henry Kissinger.