

Region's Rejection of War Shows in Tehran

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

While the world's television channels worked overtime with film footage of American GIs kissing their wives and children before being moved overseas to the Persian Gulf, and on-site reports of troops maneuvering in Kuwait's desert sands, very little attention was paid to deployments of quite another sort into the Persian Gulf. There has been a steady stream of intellectuals, regional studies experts, and high-ranking diplomats to the region, in an expanding effort to prevent war from breaking out.

In addition to the groups of peace activists and political envoys converging on Baghdad to manifest their opposition to the war, there has also been a steady stream of visitors to Tehran, capital of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranian government figures have been engaged in a diplomatic race against time, in visits to regional capitals as well as abroad, to shift the balance away from military confrontation.

An important event in this process was the 13th International Conference on "The Persian Gulf in the Light of Global Changes and Developments," held on March 4-5 in Tehran by the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), the think-tank of the foreign ministry. *EIR*'s editorial board was represented by this author as an invited speaker. During the conference, the imminent danger of war hung over the capital like a dark cloud; though some speakers pessimistically resigned themselves to examining "postwar" scenarios, the conference hosts and the vast majority of the participants focussed on preventing a war, and the catastrophic consequences a new conflict would provoke.

Iran Proposes National Reconciliation

In his remarks to the opening session, Iranian Foreign Minister Dr. Kamal Kharrazi pointed to the preparations for "another disastrous war" in the region, and called on the experts and academics convened to find ways for a coalition to prevent this "preventive war." Kharrazi questioned the notion that this were a "just war" to free the oppressed people of Iraq, as claimed by the war party. He said he did not believe it was just, and noted hesitation on the part of the warmongers. If it were a just war for freedom, he said, why do they not apologize for their actions of the past? (This referred to U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's assistance to Iraq against Iran in the 1980-1988 war.) Why now Iraq? Therefore, he concluded, there must be another aim, which must be identified.

Kharrazi recalled that it was not only the United States, but others as well, who helped Iraq (with weapons shipments), in an attempt to defeat the Iranian revolution, which he said survived thanks to the power of “natural law and divine rule.” He emphasized that the same “very radical groups” in Washington who helped Saddam Hussein against Iran in the past, are now in power and pushing for war against him.

The Foreign Minister called the Palestinian issue the main problem, saying that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who is committing daily aggressions against Palestinian Christians and Muslims, is pursuing a “final solution.” Kharrazi noted that, after two years of Intifada against this policy, suddenly the issue of Iraq has been raised. But Iraq, he said, is not the goal; it is to change the geopolitical situation of the region in Israel’s interest, and take over raw materials resources. He added that the process of development in the region, including the democratization process in Iran, is being met with hostility on the part of the United States; the “democratization” of Iraq cannot be the goal.

The nations in the region, Kharrazi said, are aware of this plot and all oppose the war. He predicted that the dreams of a new colonialism and control over raw materials, would not work.

Reflecting Iran’s concern that the war plans will go ahead, regardless of UN constraints and international resistance, Kharrazi floated a proposal for Iraqi national reconciliation, aimed at preventing conflict. First, he established the point that it is the right of the people of Iraq to decide their future; no solution can be imposed from the outside. “Can one install a military leadership in this great nation?” he asked, and responded with a resounding “No.” Instead it is time for the rulers of Iraq to decide themselves, to take a bold initiative for national reconciliation. Kharrazi said the Iraqi leadership, under UN supervision, should let the people and the opposition take part in government, in order to reach national reconciliation. He cited Tajikistan as an example—there, following civil war, Iran and Russia had mediated the reconciliation process, bringing opposition figures into government.

In answer to questions, Kharrazi clarified that his idea had nothing in common with the proposal of UAE President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan for Saddam Hussein’s “voluntary exile.” Kharrazi said that a fundamental move should be to be taken in Iraq for a UN-supervised referendum to elect its representatives. Since the ruling government is now the dominant power in Iraq, it is the government which should take the initiative for transition.

Initial reports indicate that Iraq has rejected the idea; under siege and expecting aggression, it sees precisely those opposition groups with which it should share power, as currently in league with those military forces that want war.

The Ravages of War

Most striking in the IPIS discussions, was the clarity displayed about the consequences of a war. Professor Renate



The gate of Tehran; Iran’s capital has been far more important as a center of efforts to prevent the Middle East from descending into imperial war and chaos, than many Western observers are aware. Eurasian Land-Bridge strategies for economic recovery and development, reflecting Lyndon LaRouche’s proposals, are also discussed there.

Schmidt, of Potsdam University in Germany, regretted that the consequences were not being adequately considered in ongoing war preparations. Step by step, she illustrated the effects of war in the immediate environs: the Israeli government would move decisively against the Palestinians, and escalate violence against Lebanon and Syria; regime change in Iraq would provoke mass anti-American demonstrations in Arab nations considered U.S. allies, thus threatening these governments; Saudi Arabia and Jordan, already strained by internal tensions, would be destabilized; Syria would find itself encircled by pro-U.S. states (Turkey, Jordan, and Israel); Egypt would be rocked by internal protest and terrorism; Iran would also be encircled and flooded with Iraqi refugees.

Iraq itself could disintegrate into ethnic parts, or become the region’s focal point for anti-American violence. The Kurdish-Turkish conflict in northern Iraq is another bomb-shell ready to explode, as described by Armenian scholar

Vahram Petrosyan, from the Yerevan State University.

From China, Li Guofu, director of South Asia, Middle East, and Africa Studies at the Chinese Institute of International Studies, forecast that war without UN approval would split NATO and the EU; weaken the Arab world, especially the Palestinians; and impact the world oil market. He added that U.S. occupying forces in Iraq would be targetted. Iraq could be plunged into civil war, with massive effects on neighboring countries.

Just as striking was the awareness at the meeting of the deeper motivations behind the war drive. Except for one speaker from the Washington-based U.S. Institute for Peace, who toed the line that the United States is simply determined not to let another major terrorist attack occur and would embrace nation-building in postwar Iraq “as in Afghanistan”(!), speakers demonstrated a good grasp of the historical and geopolitical background to the current war drive. Several referenced the role of Samuel Huntington and Zbigniew Brzezinski, in articulating plans for a Clash of Civilizations. Engin Oda, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, attacked both for spreading the false idea that different cultures are so different, that no common principles may be found. Indian scholar Sanjay Chaturvedi, from Punjab University, denounced the reductionist thinking of geopolitics, which deals, not with human beings and nations, but with raw materials-rich regions, from the standpoint of the “Grand Chessboard.”

Convergence on LaRouche’s Viewpoint

The author presented *EIR* founding editor Lyndon LaRouche’s analysis of the current war danger, identifying the long-term strategic aims of the war party, who the warmongers are, and what forces make up the resistance to war inside the United States. She gave a brief historical overview of the genesis and elaboration of the “National Security Strategy” for preventive war, from 1990 to the present, along with the parallel elaboration of the nuclear first-strike option. Secondly, she stressed that the target of the operation is not Iraq; its aim is to establish a new “Roman Empire.” But such an attempt cannot work; the real targets of the doctrine—the great nations of Eurasia—Russia, China, India—have formed an alliance with France and Germany against war, and *for* economic-strategic cooperation to establish the Eurasian Land-Bridge. Their devastating rejection of the war policy at the Feb. 14 UN Security Council session, followed by worldwide mass demonstrations, was a declaration of resistance against the entire policy.

Most importantly, this international resistance, kicked off by German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder in August, has its counterpart inside the United States, where LaRouche has led the intervention into the institutions of the Presidency to repeatedly postpone the war. Now, even at this late date, this author told the conference, the war could still be prevented, if international forces actively cooperated with American resistance, and both pursued the economic policy objectives

of what Iranian President Khatami has called the Coalition for Peace.

As if to illustrate the accuracy of LaRouche’s approach, several speakers filled in the picture, particularly regarding the Eurasian aspect of the question. Bakhtiyar Mirkasymov, from the Asia-Pacific Research Institute in Russia, spoke of the “anti-Russian hawks” inside the Bush Administration, who have been pressuring Russia with psychological warfare since 2000, and continue to try to sabotage Russian-Iranian cooperation on nuclear energy and other projects. Professor Oybek Makhmudov, from Tashkent University, stated that any U.S. presence in Iraq would aim at pressuring regional powers, specifically Russia, China, and Iran. Thus, the Iraq war plan constitutes a war plan against Eurasia.

Presenting Chinese experts’ views of the Iraq question, IPIS researcher Mohammed Javad Omidarnia, pointed to the fact that the increasing American presence in oil-rich Central Asia and the Middle East, since late 2001, is seen as an attempt to contain China and influence the future of Russia. U.S. control over the resources in these regions, would provide a pressure point over China, as well as Europe and Japan, dependent as they are on oil. This point was made also by Dr. Mikhail Shah of the Moscow State Institute of International Affairs. Also from Russia, Sergei Mikhaelovich Nabreanchin spoke on the impact of Persian Gulf security on peace and stability in Eurasia. considering the critical role of the Persian Gulf region, Nabreanchin said, it is urgent to build “Eurasian institutions.” He referred to a Moscow scientific conference on a new security alliance, dedicated to defending, not raw materials, but “the interests of humanity.”

Several speakers identified members of the Washington-London war party, and their policy documents, in terms reflecting *EIR*’s exposés.

Russia, France Coordinating Closely

The governments represented at Tehran included those in the forefront of the opposition to war—Permanent Members of the UN Security Council Russia, China, and France. At the concluding session of the conference, special envoys of the Russian and French foreign ministries spoke. Mr. Koluvkin of Moscow stated categorically that Russia opposes war. He noted that it took South Africa two years to accomplish disarmament, and said the Iraqi side was cooperating, though it had to demonstrate that it had destroyed all weapons of mass destruction. Koluvkin characterized it as a gross exaggeration to say that Iraq represents a threat to the region, or internationally, considering how its sovereignty has been restricted for years. Russia chooses the way of peace, he said; war is the very last resort.

Regarding a second UN resolution, Koluvkin said that none is needed, beyond Resolution 1441. We want to preserve the unity of the Security Council, but Russia will not endorse any resolution for military action, he said, without proof that Iraq is in material breach. Russia insists that internal changes

to Iraq must come from within Iraq. Referring to the Iranian Foreign Minister's proposal for national reconciliation launched by the government, Koluvkin did not expect Iraq to take such an initiative, given the danger of imminent war.

France's envoy, Pascal Bonifas, said that since Sept. 11, 2001, there has been an American move toward confrontation, at the same time mis-naming Ariel Sharon a "man of peace." He noted that with military means alone, one cannot defeat terrorism; It should be fought with democratic and legal means, to stop the evil itself. European and Islamic states, Bonifas said, view the war as a destabilization. It would launch a Clash of Civilizations, and it would violate international law, which cannot be selective. It would nourish terrorism as well, and do damage to the international order.

France and Germany, Bonifas said, are part of Old Europe and are proud of having learned from history, to avoid war by all means; to prefer dialogue to clash, diplomacy to military means. The millions worldwide who have demonstrated against the war must be heeded.

The interventions by special envoys from Moscow and Paris were further proof of those countries' close coordination with Tehran against a war. In fact, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov arrived in the capital for a two-day visit shortly after the conference, during which he reiterated Russia's commitment to prevent war, as well as to continue nuclear and other cooperation with Iran.

'The Peace of the Graveyard'

In a private meeting at Tehran's Marmora Palace, former Iranian President, current Head of the Expediency Council Hashemi Rafsanjani, received a group of conference speakers, expressing his wish that "world policy-makers" would heed their deliberations. The former President focussed on two points: the crucial strategic role of the Persian Gulf region; and the fallacy of thinking that a military solution could bring it stability. "No place on Earth is more crucial" than the Persian Gulf/Middle East, due to its raw materials resources and location, Rafsanjani said. He compared the current war plans to the "divide and rule" idea of the British colonialist period, which, today, he said, will not work. Referring to published plans to install a military ruler to govern Iraq, Rafsanjani forecast that this would foster terrorism; furthermore, by creating instability in the region, it would destabilize world energy flows. A U.S. military occupation force, deployed to secure the free flow of energy with troops, planes, and ships, will achieve the opposite, he said. Soldiers cannot secure oil wells, pipelines thousands of kilometers long, and



Iran's Institute for Political and International Studies conference on the Persian Gulf, on March 4-5, was the scene of multi-national input from among the nations which have allied against a U.S.-British war on Iraq. They heard LaRouche's strategy from EIR editor, author Muriel Mirak-Weissbach.

sea ports. The case of Afghanistan is a good example of how military conquest does not mean security.

Rafsanjani went further, to say that Israel may think it would be happy with such an arrangement, but it would end up being the loser, because, if the region is unstable, "those warriors who are ready to sacrifice themselves for their rights" would increase in number. The old colonialist methods, if applied, will turn the region into a cemetery, and a cradle for revolutionary movements against the security of the region and the world.

Rafsanjani referred to information in his possession, showing that if the crisis in the Persian Gulf explodes, then the whole world will experience a serious shock, global markets will be affected, and unpredictable events will occur. He said that Iran expects other forces to intervene. He expressed his hope that Britain and America would consider the situation carefully, and realize that military power can not solve the problem. They, he said, should solve the problem which they created. Iran would be ready to help.

Speaking of Afghanistan, where even American forces on the ground would not be secure, Rafsanjani said that what is required are jobs, infrastructure, and development. The Iraqi people, in his view, would not take an American military attack as the Afghans did. An American military governor in Baghdad would be faced with the fact that the institutions which are in control—the Baath party, the army, the intelligence agencies—have been around for 30 years, and are not created overnight. One might suppress the country, but not control it in the long term.

Rafsanjani concluded with an appeal to heed the lessons of history, and opt for wisdom in place of greed, dialogue and negotiations in place of force.