



## **The Wider War**

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The papers and airwaves are full of stories about an impending American assault on Iran. Some accounts claim we will target their nuclear facilities. Others speak of a far more ambitious attack designed to destroy the Islamic Republic's regime. Whatever the truth of these stories--vigorously denied by the Bush administration--we are clearly paying much more attention to Iran than we did in the past, and this is a good thing.

The terror war now extends to four continents--running from Thailand and Indonesia to India and Pakistan, down the Horn of Africa to Somalia and Yemen and back up to Afghanistan, on to Iraq, Palestine/Israel, Lebanon, and thence to Europe and the United States. To restrict our national debate to Iraq and Afghanistan alone is to accept the failure of

strategic vision that has plagued us from the war's earliest days.

We have decided to fight in one place at a time, secure that area, and then move on. That isn't good enough, because it gives our enemies the luxury of attacking us where, when and how they choose. Neither Iraq nor Afghanistan will ever have decent security so long as we only play defense; we have to attack our enemies when we wish, not respond to their initiatives, and their most important operational bases are outside Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our primary enemies are states, which provide the jihadis with much of the wherewithal for their operations: intelligence, weapons and other technology (including the advanced explosive devices Iran gives the terrorists in Iraq), false

documents, safe havens and training facilities. (For a long time they needed money, too, but nowadays ransoms and drug profits have eased the burden on their state financiers.)

Until the fall of Saddam, there were four pre-eminent supporters of terrorist groups: Iraq, Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia. Now there are three, and, as it has been all along, Iran is by far the most important. The Iranians created Hezbollah, probably the most lethal terrorist organization in the world, as well as Islamic Jihad. In all, they support no less than 30 terror groups, both Sunni and Shiite, including al Qaeda (several of whose leaders have been operating from Iran since the liberation of Afghanistan).

Syria works hand in mailed glove with the mullahs in Lebanon and Iraq. The Saudis provide money for terrorist groups and support a global network of radical Wahhabi mosques and schools that indoctrinate young Muslims in the ways of jihad.

Without the active support of those three countries, it would be a lot easier to defeat the terrorists on the battlefields. Without Syrian and Iranian support, Hezbollah would shrivel up and die. Ditto for Islamic Jihad, whose leader, the former Florida-based academic Ramadan Abdullah Shallah, recently met in Tehran with Iranian leaders, plus Hezbollah's operational chief, Imad Mughniyah, and Iraqi militia leader Moqtada al-Sadr.

Al Qaeda would be similarly weakened, and the many Palestinian terrorist organizations that keep their offices in Damascus would find it very difficult to relocate and maintain their effectiveness. All would be weakened by the loss of Saudi funding, and moderate Muslims everywhere, including in the U.S, would breathe a sigh of relief if the Wahhabi mosques were closed.

It doesn't require more boots on the ground or bombing raids. It requires a traditional American policy: support for democratic revolution against our tyrannical enemies.

Iran is the keystone of the terrorist edifice. Should there be free elections, no one wearing a turban would be elected to anything, and there is good reason to believe the country is ripe for a pro-Western democratic revolution.

The regime clearly has a cash-flow problem; its failure to meet scheduled payments has driven its friends, the Russians, to suspend construction of the Bushehr nuclear reactor. There are also demonstrations against it all over the country--and no wonder, with more than 40% of the young population (two-thirds under 30 years of age) below the poverty line, widespread drug addiction, and thousands of women sold into sex slavery every year.

Nor is it surprising that some of the oppressed minorities have launched armed attacks against the Revolutionary Guards Corps and the fanatical Basij forces, the regime's prime instruments of oppression.

There are open denunciations of President Ahmadinejad, of former President Rafsanjani and even of Supreme Leader Khamenei. All this is taking place against the background of the cancer-ridden Khamenei (who is expected to die in the near future), and a thinly veiled struggle for succession.

Pro-democracy organizations in Iran believe they can bring down the regime if they receive support from the U.S., of the same sort we gave to Solidarity in Poland, the Aquino forces in the Philippines, the Cedar revolutionaries in Lebanon, the Orange revolutionaries in the Ukraine, and so many others. They wish our leaders would openly endorse regime change, and they would like our radios and television to support freedom instead of apologizing for the mullahs.

We should call for Western trade unions to build a strike fund for Iranian workers, many of whom have not been paid for months, some for more than a year, and we should provide sympathetic Iranians with laptops, servers, cell and satellite phones and phone cards, so that they can communicate with one another.

Regime change in Iran does not require an invasion, or even the sort of bombing so many are now advocating in order to thwart the mullahs' program to build atomic bombs. The issue is the regime, not its instruments; thousands of Americans have already been killed and wounded by Iran's terror army. We should assault the mullahs with our

most potent weapons, which are primarily political. The recent sanctions against Iran are welcome, but support for freedom is the key to regime change in Tehran.

The mullahs know their doom will come from their own people, which is why they have embarked on a new wave of mass repression, with a spate of public hangings in the Kurdish, Balouch and Ahwaz areas, a wave of arrests of pro-democracy leaders in Tehran and Isfahan (the most famous face of the Iranian resistance, Ahmad Batebi, reportedly suffered a stroke in the mullahs' torture chambers, and is now in a coma).

In Khuzestan--the oil region in the south--there are plans for a massive program of ethnic cleansing, moving more than a million Arabs to other regions. It brings back memories of Stalin's efforts to destroy Soviet "nationalities." All these actions bespeak a profound insecurity in Tehran, just waiting for the free world to exploit.

A free Iran would deliver a devastating global blow to the terrorists, and would no doubt change the calculus--and perhaps the regime--of Syria. Under those happy circumstances, we might muster the will to insist that the Saudis shut down the Wahhabi schools and mosques, which constitute an assembly line of fanatics all over the world.

It's an ambitious strategy, but we are an ambitious people. We are engaged in a global war, and while we have done well in many re-

spects, we have thus far refused to recognize the real nature of the fight

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