

# The Iraq War and Iranian Power

Ted Galen Carpenter and Malou Innocent

By deposing Saddam Hussein, the United States radically altered the balance of power in the Persian Gulf. Since the early 1940s, power had been dispersed among Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the United States, Iran and the Soviet Union (and its successor, the Russian Federation). The most intense manoeuvring within this multipolar balance occurred between Iraq and Iran, with neither side achieving a clear advantage. That dynamic has now changed. Even before the US-led 2003 invasion of Iraq, Iran possessed a budding nuclear programme, the region's largest population, an expansive ballistic-missile arsenal and, through sponsorship, influence over the Lebanese Shia group Hizbullah. The George W. Bush administration and neo-conservative proponents of the war overlooked these assets, and America's removal of Saddam Hussein as the principal strategic counterweight to Iran paved the way for an expansion of Iran's influence. The United States now faces the question of how it can mitigate potential threats to its interests if Iran succeeds in consolidating its new position as the leading power in the region.

## The balancing game

During the Cold War, the United States created a network of militarily capable states as a bulwark against Soviet expansion. The main objective was to deny the Soviets access to Persian Gulf resources and the Indian Ocean basin. At different times, this strategy involved collusion with various Iranian and Iraqi regimes.

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America's balancing game began in earnest in 1953, when the US Central Intelligence Agency and Britain's Secret Intelligence Service overthrew Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh. The United States then reinstated Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, who became Washington's principal strategic ally in the region for the next quarter-century. But America also sought to advance its interests in Iraq: Washington tacitly supported the Ba'ath Party's suppression of the Iraqi Communist Party in 1963, and helped restore the Ba'athists to power in 1968 after a takeover by pro-Nasser Arab nationalists.

Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, US policy tilted modestly, but not overwhelmingly, in favour of Iran. After Iraq signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union in 1972, the United States intensified its support for Iran, even offering the Shah 'the right to buy any nonnuclear U.S. weapons system without congressional or Pentagon review'.<sup>1</sup> But this honeymoon did not last long. Decades of oppression under the Shah led to the rise of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and fed deep-seated resentment toward the United States among the Iranian people, culminating in the embassy hostage crisis of 1979.

In the 1980s, America was in the unfortunate position of having to back either pro-Soviet Iraq or anti-US Iran. It chose the lesser of two evils, intensifying its courtship of Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88). The Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency gave Saddam Hussein battle-planning assistance, satellite imagery, tactical planning for air strikes, and information on Iranian deployments.<sup>2</sup> Though Iraq and Iran both made advances at the beginning of the war, the conflict ultimately devolved into a bloody and protracted stalemate. Because the region remained divided, neither side could achieve hegemony and shut out American influence. Allowing the rivals to weaken each other was seen as ultimately in the US interest.

But the war eventually harmed neighbouring Kuwait. Iran, in retaliation for Kuwaiti government assistance to Iraq, laid free-floating mines in Kuwaiti shipping lanes and launched missile attacks against Kuwaiti oil tankers. The United States began re-flagging Kuwaiti ships and protecting them through a naval escort programme, *Operation Earnest Will*.<sup>3</sup> By changing the nationality of Kuwaiti tankers and preventing further Iranian intimidation, President Ronald Reagan stood squarely behind Iraq.

Eight years of bloodshed finally ended with a UN-mandated ceasefire in August 1988. Iran was militarily and politically devastated: millions were dead, Khomeini was ill and the Iranian populace was profoundly demoralised. But Iraq recovered relatively quickly, equipped with a powerful, experienced and

well-trained million-man army. By 1990, US policymakers were growing uneasy with Saddam's latent power. Colin Powell recalled that

we shifted our strategy quite deliberately ... away from Iran and more toward Iraq because of the bellicose nature of the mutterings that would come from the Iraqi leadership in Baghdad ... Saddam Hussein had this enormous military capability and, frankly, he was on the right side of the Persian Gulf to cause mischief, more so than Iran on the other side of the Persian Gulf.<sup>4</sup>

Saddam had no intention of preserving the status quo: his forces invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Although the immediate objective of the resulting US-led international coalition was to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait, Washington's larger aim was to prevent Saddam from dominating the Gulf. For the next 12 years, from the end of the Gulf War in 1991 until America's invasion of Iraq in 2003, Saddam's expansionist tendencies were successfully contained, principally through no-fly zones and a stringent sanctions regime. But Iran was rebuilding its military, expanding its industrial infrastructure and placing increased priority on its nuclear programme. Although Iran's strength was growing and Iraq's receding, the balance in the Gulf remained reasonably intact. That changed dramatically in 2003.

US Persian Gulf policy before 2003, and especially during the Cold War, was predicated to a large extent on realist calculations. Although these shifting alliances have since been questioned on moral and ethical grounds, such geopolitical manoeuvring secured American access to the region's resources, denied the Soviet Union control of those resources, and guaranteed the region's overall strategic makeup would be tilted in America's favour. But in March 2003, President George W. Bush jettisoned the pragmatism of realpolitik for a more quixotic foreign policy of spreading democracy around the world, especially in the Middle East and Persian Gulf.

### **Neo-conservatives and Persian Gulf policy**

Neo-conservative scholars, many of whom have either served in or advised the Bush administration, scorn balance-of-power realism as obsolete and immoral.<sup>5</sup> Rather than rely on traditional power balancing, they follow a 'bandwagon' logic. Firstly, the argument goes, the awe of American military power would inspire fear, compelling opponents to 'jump on the American bandwagon' rather than confront America's wrath.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, the example of democracy in Iraq would lead countries throughout the region to transform into peaceful, democratic

nations.<sup>7</sup> Robert Kagan articulated this mixture of self-interest (ridding Saddam of weapons) and idealism (spreading democracy): ‘a successful intervention in Iraq would revolutionize the strategic situation in the Middle East, in ways both tangible and intangible, and all to the benefit of American interests’.<sup>8</sup> But Kagan was wrong. Realists knew before the war that no amount of pre-war planning or ‘boots on the ground’ could moderate the inevitable expansion of Iran’s influence. Bush administration officials, and neo-conservative scholars outside the administration, were so focused on removing Saddam Hussein from power that they largely overlooked the wider geopolitical ramifications of his removal.

Not only did they under-appreciate the influence of Iran, they also believed Tehran would acquiesce to American dominance in the region. Days prior to the invasion of Iraq, William Kristol, editor of the *Weekly Standard*, argued that the mere threat of war was rousing speculation of political reform within neighbouring Iran,<sup>9</sup> and American Enterprise Institute scholar Michael Ledeen proposed that the United States help Iranian citizens by freeing them from the repression of Tehran’s tyrannical regime.<sup>10</sup> Neo-conservatives were confident that America’s overwhelming military prowess and liberal-democratic ethos would compel Iran’s leaders to cower. It was a critical miscalculation.

A handful of prescient experts warned that Iran would fill the void left by the overthrow of Iraq’s Ba’athist regime.<sup>11</sup> Middle East historian Phebe Marr argued that ‘such a collapse of authority could trigger interference from neighbors. Turkey could intervene ... [and] Iran ... could follow suit.’<sup>12</sup> Michael O’Hanlon,

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a scholar at the Brookings Institution who reluctantly supported the war, nevertheless believed ‘such chaos [following Saddam’s ouster] could entice Iran into pursuing territorial gains in Iraq’s oil-rich and Shi’ite south’.<sup>13</sup> And Texas A&M University Professor Christopher Layne argued that Iran would possibly become irredentist: ‘Iran will seek predominant political influence (if not outright annexation) of southern Iraq’.<sup>14</sup> But by late 2002, the alleged

threat of Iraq’s nuclear-, biological- and chemical-weapons programmes was so conflated with national-security considerations that dissenting viewpoints were marginalised. This drumbeat to war grew so loud that war advocates were able to impugn the patriotism of war opponents, discouraging a more rigorous examination of the probable costs and benefits of invading Iraq.

### The Iran factor

Tehran has two apparent goals in Iraq. The first is to tie down coalition forces in a virulent counter-insurgency, inhibiting the United States from contemplat-

ing a military confrontation with Iran. The second is to deepen the considerable political and economic influence Iran holds over Iraqi Shi'ites. Tehran seems to be hedging its bets, sowing short-term instability while cultivating long-term political gains.

According to US intelligence officials, Iran provides Shia militias in Iraq with shoulder-fired missiles, multiple rocket launchers and rocket-propelled grenades. Iran also supports the radical Shia cleric **Moqtada al-Sadr and his thousands of Mahdi Army loyalists**, provides training and financial support to the Badr Brigade, and supports the country's two largest Shia political parties, the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's Dawa Party.

While Bush remains committed to Iraq, American military might may not be enough to compete with Tehran's 'hearts and minds' campaign.<sup>15</sup> Iran provides hospital treatment and surgery for wounded Iraqis, supplies Iraq with 2 million litres of kerosene a day, and provides 20% of Iraq's cooking gas.<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Katzman, a Middle East specialist for the Congressional Research Service, calls Iran's wide-ranging leverage within Iraq 'strategic depth', making the Iraqi government and populace acquiescent to Iranian interests.<sup>17</sup>

Things could get much worse if the 60% Shia majority in Iraq seeks to establish 'a Western-style republic based on Islamic law' similar to Iran.<sup>18</sup> The emergence of two adjacent Shia-dominated countries at the heart of the Middle East was exactly what Sunni Arab governments feared in the wake of Saddam's demise. Patrick Cockburn, Middle East correspondent for the *Independent*, noted that 'a prime reason why the U.S. supported Saddam Hussein during his war with Iran in 1980–88 is that it did not want a Shi'a clerical regime, possibly sympathetic to America's enemies in Tehran, to come to power in Iraq'.<sup>19</sup> In short, Bush and his retinue naively assumed that Shi'ites would share power with Sunnis in a new, democratic Iraq. Instead, Bush's policies have created the conditions for a sectarian proxy war, with Iraq as the battleground and America as referee, between Shia-dominated Iraq and Iran against Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>20</sup>

But Iraq is not Tehran's only source of strength: within a few years Iran may join the nuclear club. For the past two decades, Iran has stood in contravention of International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. Rather than suspend its enrichment and reprocessing activities, as stipulated under UN Security Council resolutions 1696 and 1737, Tehran has ignored multiple ultimatums and clings obstinately to rights it claims the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty grants all member states.<sup>21</sup>

Though many experts, especially neo-conservatives, speculate that Iran would use a nuclear bomb for blackmail or intimidation, that scenario is

unlikely. Iran could be expected, however, to become somewhat more assertive geopolitically in the region behind a nuclear shield. The capability would strengthen the Iranian regime's negotiating posture, enabling it to back, with far greater impunity, its terrorist allies.

Experts agree that, originally, Tehran wanted nuclear weapons for prestige and to obtain political deference within the region.<sup>22</sup> Now, its strategic ambitions are shaped by the invasion and occupation of Iraq, and Iran seems motivated to acquire nuclear weapons primarily to deter a conventional American military intervention.<sup>23</sup> After being stigmatised as part of the 'axis of evil' and seeing their fellow axis-member Iraq invaded and occupied, Iran's rulers may well have concluded that their country would be next. Government officials of another 'axis of evil' nation that has pursued a nuclear programme, North Korea, told a US congressional delegation in June 2003 that their country was building nuclear weapons to avoid the same fate as Saddam Hussein.<sup>24</sup>

Iran's attempts to thwart American hegemony are also aided by its sponsorship of non-state actors. Iran is the most active state sponsor of terrorism, a tool it uses to advance its political influence in the region.<sup>25</sup> Iran's strongest extra-territorial arm is Hizbullah, the Shia terrorist organisation-cum-political party based in southern Lebanon. Its conventional military strength is significant. Hizbullah's ability to absorb a ferocious Israeli bombardment in August 2006 enabled Tehran to rally Muslim opinion and score a strategic, albeit indirect, gain. Iran also provides strategic support for Palestinian terrorist groups such as the al-Quds (Jerusalem) Force, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas.

Iran's conventional capabilities, too, make the country a force to reckon with. Its large population means it can sustain a larger military than Saudi Arabia or the Emirates,<sup>26</sup> and despite some antiquated features Iran's military technology is second in the region only to the United States.<sup>27</sup> Iran possesses the largest ballistic-missile inventory in the Persian Gulf – missiles which can reach Israel, Saudi Arabia and US military bases in Iraq.<sup>28</sup> If Iran's nuclear programme continues apace, the country could one day mate nuclear warheads to its ballistic missiles. Although Iran, for the time being, is in the strategic lead, the Gulf Arab sheikhdoms are attempting to forge ahead. In February 2007, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates went on a shopping spree at the semi-annual International Defence Exhibition in Abu Dhabi, signing billions of dollars in weapons contracts.

Some experts argue Iran could also use the 'oil weapon': blocking the 34km-wide Strait of Hormuz and conducting submarine and anti-ship missile attacks against ports and oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Gulf Cooperation Council states. If Iran succeeded in closing the strait, Persian Gulf

oil exports would drop by 85%.<sup>29</sup> This could result in a temporary price spike of up to \$100, and possibly as much as \$250, per barrel.<sup>30</sup>

Other analysts dismiss the notion that Iran would be capable of disrupting the strait. They argue that blocking the strait would be a pyrrhic strategy, considerably damaging Iran's own economy while having a negligible affect on the United States. They also argue that the size, readiness and capabilities of Tehran's armed forces would be insufficient to block the strait. But the history of naval blockades shows that nations in similar situations have successfully endured the economic effects,<sup>31</sup> and Iran could resort to an asymmetric naval tactic called 'dispersed swarming'. Hundreds of small armed boats attacking one or two at a time from various directions could conceivably overwhelm a US carrier battle group.<sup>32</sup> This tactic would make it difficult for the US Navy to detect and repel Iranian naval forces, providing Tehran a means of circumventing the limitations of its inferior navy.

Although Iran has many strengths, it also has a number of strategic weaknesses. The most significant is its economy. The populist agenda laid out in President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's 2005 presidential campaign, to 'put the country's oil money onto every family's dinner table', has failed, exacerbating problems in the economy.<sup>33</sup> Iran is plagued by high inflation (14.8%) and widespread unemployment (11.2%).<sup>34</sup> Iran also has an image problem. It is highly unlikely, as some experts fear, that Shia, Persian Iran will lead a new 'pan-Islamic' movement. Tehran is not held in high esteem by most nations, and unlike al-Qaeda the clerical regime lacks charismatic leaders, an ecumenical worldview or appealing ideology to attract large numbers of adherents.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, evidence suggests that Sunni states in the region are uniting against rather than with Iran. According to Mustafa Alani of the Dubai-based Gulf Research Center, the agenda of Gulf Arab states is more in line with Washington than with Tehran.<sup>36</sup>

### Policy choices

The United States needs a calculated, interest-based solution to its problems with Iran. One option, advocated by some neo-conservatives, is to launch cruise missiles and surgical air strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities, and possibly against Iran's entire military command and control system. Though the United States could destroy many of Iran's nuclear installations, this strategy has profound drawbacks. War-gaming expert and retired US Air Force Colonel Sam Gardiner argues that the military option 'would be unlikely to yield ... the results American policymakers *do* want, and ... highly likely to yield results that they *do not*'.<sup>37</sup> For example, while Washington may not want to use ground forces

in such an attack, unpredictable contingencies might require them, so the military option might lead to further damage to the United States' enervated and overstretched ground forces.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, since Iran's nuclear facilities are near urban areas, misdirected firepower could cause many civilian casualties. This would alienate yet another generation of Iranians, 70% of whom are under 30 years old and have no recollection of the Islamic Revolution or the 1979 hostage crisis.<sup>39</sup> Young Iranians have little affection for the clerical regime, but US air strikes would turn that around.

Iran would likely retaliate, perhaps against Israeli cities or by encouraging Shia militias in Iraq to openly resist the US occupation. Even more alarming is Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's declaration that if America were to attack Iran, it would respond by attacking US interests worldwide.<sup>40</sup> Finally, since air strikes would not deprive Iran of its proxies in Iraq, Lebanon or the Palestinian territories, Tehran might encourage these groups to unleash an aggressive campaign to undermine security throughout the region.

*Iran would likely retaliate*

A marginally better option would be to exploit the sectarian divide in the region by using Sunni Arab states to balance Iran. By shifting the burden of containment to these nations, many of which already abhor Tehran's clerical regime, America could protect its interests without putting itself into direct confrontation with Iran. Such a coalition would involve increased intelligence sharing, expanded arms sales, joint military operations and heightened maritime security. Saudi Arabia's location, advanced weaponry and status as the world's largest producer of crude oil give it important strategic advantages in the Persian Gulf. Egypt is the only nation with manpower resources to match Iran, with 15.5m men fit for military service compared to 15.6 in Iran. The Egyptian armed forces number 468,500.<sup>41</sup> Jordan and the remaining Gulf Cooperation Council states could augment the larger Sunni powers in a containment strategy, but are too small in population and territory to balance Iran militarily.

One benefit of such a coalition is that the United States could sustain or even draw down its forward-deployed forces in the Gulf. This is outweighed by some disadvantages. Internal weaknesses in the two biggest potential balancers, Saudi Arabia and Egypt – the decadence of the Saudi royal family and the lack of accountability under Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak – feed resentment among volatile jihadist forces, and may constrict these countries' abilities to promote regional stability and counter the Iranian threat.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, Saudi Arabia, the potential leader of the alliance, presents the United States with a double-edged sword: like Iran, it has flirted with terrorism, a fact Washington has grudgingly tolerated.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, Egypt may be geographically too far from

the Gulf to balance effectively against Iran, while Saudi Arabia's forces are too small to take full advantage of their advanced weaponry. Finally, the balance of power in the Gulf would be wholly sectarian. US complicity in a division within Islam would inevitably incite more terrorism against America. Moreover, such a coalition would increase the likelihood of a regional war, with the United States again in the middle of the fray.

#### *A new status quo*

Like it or not, Iran is now a major player in the region. Accepting this, rather than reflexively seeking to confront and isolate Tehran, would be the most effective policy. A countervailing coalition, with all its disadvantages, would be an inferior substitute for diplomatic and economic engagement. In May 2007, the Bush administration spoke directly with Iran, which it had previously refused to do. But when the Bush administration says they are committed to diplomacy, as Gardiner puts it, 'we need to remind ourselves that they ... mean ... Iran must do what we want'.<sup>44</sup> We may have to wait for a future administration, committed to process diplomacy, to blaze a path toward substantive dialogue with Iran.

During the Richard M. Nixon administration, the United States implemented a formal policy of constructive engagement with the People's Republic of China, reversing more than two decades of unrelenting hostility. Nixon and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger sought to exploit Mao Zedong's fear of the Soviet Union and use China as a *de facto* ally against it. This was during the Vietnam War, and China's assistance to the North Vietnamese could have inhibited dialogue.<sup>45</sup> Although US intelligence officials knew that China was supporting America's foe, Nixon and Kissinger calculated that its contribution was not critical enough to prohibit meaningful dialogue. They recognised the role China was playing and used it to America's strategic advantage.

Like Mao's China, Iran is undermining an American war, but, this does not outweigh the benefits America would reap from accepting and trying to harness Iran's influence in the region. Moreover, just like improved relations with China accompanied the US setback in Vietnam, improved US relations with Iran might make failure in Iraq less painful and momentous. Moreover, determined diplomatic pressure could lead Tehran to stem support of its terrorist allies.

Tehran's clerics may not want to talk to the United States. But Iran has shown itself both rational and pragmatic, and would likely see a benefit in cooperating with a global superpower that deploys forces on its borders, especially if the long-term goal of a broad dialogue would be full normalisation of political, diplomatic and economic relations. Due to decades of estrangement, dialogue may not give the United States immediate leverage or produce instantaneous results.

Talks should therefore centre on issues of mutual concern, such as stability in Iraq and containing the spread of Sunni insurgents and their al-Qaeda allies. Presumably this was the focus of the 28 May discussion between the US and Iranian ambassadors in Baghdad. Dialogue must also commence with no pre-conditions from either side, such as a moratorium on uranium enrichment or a withdrawal of US troops. If the secretary of state and the president, rather than underlings, worked directly with the leadership in Tehran it would underscore the seriousness and sincerity of the attempted rapprochement.

Diplomacy should not be seen as a panacea. The most pressing issues facing Iraq, including national reconciliation, basic security, the provision of goods and services, and an equitable oil-sharing plan, cannot be solved by Iran. Tehran's real power in Iraq is its leverage over Shia militias; and Iran would be incapable of completely disarming them. Moreover, if America does engage Iran on Iraq, Tehran could demand that America lift pressure on its nuclear programme. The potential of a regional nuclear arms race, spurred by Iran's prime adversary, Saudi Arabia, should be stressed to Tehran. Dialogue on such issues, however difficult, could be a foundation for a normal and, at least on some matters, more cooperative relationship between the United States and Iran.

Successful US–Iranian dialogue could be a springboard to a wider regional conference, including Syria and the Gulf Cooperation Council states. As Kenneth Pollack of the Brookings Institution put it, 'no neighboring state is likely to significantly alter strategy unless they all do'.<sup>46</sup> A comprehensive and mutually agreed-upon framework would be the first step for establishing a durable and sustainable regional peace.

Washington should balance a diplomatic approach to Iran by encouraging the Gulf states to assume a greater security role, a watered-down version of the countervailing coalition strategy. The Bush administration is currently taking such steps, albeit modestly. The US Navy has deployed two aircraft carrier battle groups to the Persian Gulf in a show of 'big stick' diplomacy; and with the help of Saudi, Egyptian, Jordanian and Israeli intelligence services, the Arab Gulf states have funded political movements and covert paramilitary operations designed to weaken Iranian influence and retard its growth.<sup>47</sup>

On top of this coordinated campaign, the United States should continue to sell sophisticated weapons to Iran's neighbours. Riyadh and Washington have already agreed to upgrade defence and military cooperation, and during the latest shopping extravaganza at the International Defence Exhibition in February, Saudi Arabia spent over \$50 billion on *Apache* helicopters, *Patriot* missile batteries, US guidance control systems and theatre cruise missiles,<sup>48</sup> while the UAE signed contracts for jet fighters, military training and early-warning systems.<sup>49</sup>

This is on top of Washington's recent series of arms deals with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states worth at least \$20bn. The Gulf monarchies are in a panic over America's 'imperial overstretch'. They fear that if another regional crisis were to erupt, US forces would be unable to effectively defend them. This fear is warranted. The United States cannot successfully manage another *Desert Shield*-like operation to come promptly to the defence of Kuwait, or any sheikhdom on the Arabian Peninsula, with large ground forces. Thus, for these states, possessing a military deterrent makes strategic sense.

In selling more weapons platforms to Gulf states, the United States should not overtly push them into challenging Iran, lest they appear beholden to Washington's interests. As one expert in the Gulf explains, 'we have a common interest with the U.S. ... but the problem is that we have a huge mistrust of the U.S. and cannot publicly support its position'.<sup>50</sup> Overtly pressing these powers would be counterproductive. The balance in the Gulf should be tacitly supported and subject to tactical improvisations if there is an improvement in US-Iranian relations.

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Prior to the Iraq War, traditional balance-of-power realists predicted that Iran would act to undermine America's position in occupied Iraq and be the principal geo-strategic beneficiary from Iraq's removal as a regional counterweight. Neo-conservatives predicted the Iranian regime would probably collapse and, even if it did not, Tehran would have no choice but to accept US dominance.<sup>51</sup> But as a result of Washington's policy blunders, Iran is now a substantially strengthened actor.

The United States now needs to soberly assess its predicament. Neo-conservatives believe America should take a hard-line against Iran, perhaps launching air strikes against its nuclear facilities and military targets. In fact, if regime change in Iraq had gone as planned, Iran would have been targeted for the same fate. But with the failure of Washington's strategy to transform the Middle East and Persian Gulf, a new approach is needed, and soon. While turning an adversary into a possible partner is difficult, the United States does not need to establish a deep friendship, much less an alliance, with Iran. It only needs to find a confluence or overlap of US and Iranian interests, and threats to those interests, to foster cooperation. This can only be achieved through diplomacy that acknowledges Tehran's strengthened position.

## Notes

- 1 Marvin Zonis, 'Mohammed Reza Pahlavi', in Bernard Reich (ed.), *Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), p. 357.
- 2 Even during this period, though, Washington hedged its bets. While America was helping Iraq it was also delivering to Iran, via Israeli intermediaries, TOW anti-tank missiles and several tonnes of weapons and equipment. For more on the Iran–Contra Affair, or 'arms for hostages' sales, see the James M. McCormick and Steven S. Smith forum 'The Iran Arms Sale and the Intelligence Oversight Act of 1980', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 20, no. 1, Winter 1987, pp. 29–37; and Jonathan Marshall, 'Israel, the Contras and the North Trial', *Middle East Report*, no. 160, September–October 1989, pp. 34–8. For more on US support of Iraq, see Patrick E. Tyler, 'Offices Say U.S. Aided Iraq in War Despite Use of Gas', *New York Times*, 17 August 2002; Dilip Hiro, 'Iraq and Poison Gas', *The Nation*, 28 August 2002, and 'When US Turned a Blind Eye to Poison Gas', *The Observer*, 1 September 2002.
- 3 Randy B. Bell, 'Expansion of American Persian Gulf Policy by Three Presidents', Marine Corps University Command and Staff College, 1990, available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1990/BRB.htm>; and Margaret G. Wachenfeld, 'Reflagging Kuwaiti Tankers: A U.S. Response in the Persian Gulf', *Duke Law Journal*, vol. 38, no. 1, February 1988, pp. 174–202.
- 4 See 'Oral History: Colin Powell', Frontline: The Gulf War, 9 January 1996 (updated July 2002), available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/oral/decision.html>.
- 5 Prominent neo-conservatives who have either served or advised the Bush administration include Elliot Abrams, John Bolton, Richard Perle, Peter W. Rodman, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and R. James Woolsey. See 'Letter to President William J. Clinton', Project for the New American Century, 26 January 1998, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqlintonletter.htm>.
- 6 For a comprehensive examination of neo-conservatism versus realism, see John J. Mearsheimer, 'Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: Realism versus Neo-Conservatism', OpenDemocracy.net, 19 May 2005.
- 7 Joshua Muravchik introduces the principles underlying neo-conservatism: 'The first is empathy with fellow human beings ... Second, the more democratic the world, the friendlier America's environment will be ... Third, the more democratic the world, the more peaceful it is likely to be.' See Joshua Muravchik, *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny* (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1991) p. 8. *Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer said 'the United States is in a position to bring about a unique and potentially revolutionary development in the Arab world: a genuinely pluralistic, open and free society'. See Charles Krauthammer, 'The Critics Are Wrong Again', Townhall.com, 2 May 2003.
- 8 Robert Kagan, 'Saddam's Impending Victory', *The Weekly Standard*, 2 February 1998, pp. 22–5.
- 9 William Kristol, 'The Imminent War', *The Weekly Standard*, 17 March 2003.

- 10 Michael Ledeen, 'The Blind Leading the Blind', *National Review Online*, 21 November 2002.
- 11 For example, one of us (Carpenter) said in January 2002 that dismembering Iraq 'would also eliminate the only significant regional military counterweight to Iran.' See Ted Galen Carpenter, 'Overthrow Saddam? Be Careful What You Wish For', *Cato.org*, 14 January 2002.
- 12 Phebe Marr, 'Background: Threat and Response', *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, Senate Hearings on Iraq War Scenarios, 1 August 2002, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle\\_east/july-dec02/holman\\_8-01.html#](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/july-dec02/holman_8-01.html#).
- 13 Michael O'Hanlon, 'The Price of Stability', *New York Times*, 22 October 2002.
- 14 Christopher Layne, 'The Post-Saddam Quagmire', *LA Weekly*, 20 March 2003.
- 15 For example, according to George Friedman of Stratfor Intelligence, 'the perception in the Iraqi government is clearly that Bush is extremely weak and that ... Iran ... does not appear weak'. See George Friedman, 'Geopolitical Diary: Iraq's Evolving Relationship with Iran', Strategic Forecasting Inc., 30 December 2006.
- 16 Joshua Partlow, 'Tehran's Influence Grows as Iraqis See Advantages', *Washington Post*, 26 January 2007.
- 17 Kenneth Katzman, 'Iran's Influence in Iraq', *CRS Report to Congress*, 3 April 2007, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/82981.pdf>.
- 18 George Friedman, *America's Secret War: Inside the Hidden Worldwide Struggle Between America and Its Enemies* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), p. 7.
- 19 Patrick Cockburn, 'What the Bush Administration Has Wrought in Iraq', *TomDispatch.com*, 9 May 2007.
- 20 According to Ambassador Chas Freeman, 'Saudi Arabia and for that matter Jordan, are not prepared to acquiesce in what they would see as an Iranian domination of Iraq or in the decimation of their kin.' Quoted in Stephen Collinson, 'Specter of Iraqi Proxy War Spooks Washington', *Agence France Presse*, 14 December 2006.
- 21 According to IAEA Director General reports, Iran has not established full and sustained suspension of all uranium enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, as set out in UNSC 1696 or the Additional Protocol. See 'Security Council Imposes Sanctions on Iran for Failure to Halt Uranium Enrichment, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1737 (2006): Measures Will Be Lifted if Iran Suspends Suspect Activities; Report Due from Atomic Energy Agency on Compliance within 60 Days', Security Council, 5612<sup>th</sup> Meeting (AM), 23 December 2006, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8928.doc.htm>.
- 22 Mark Fitzpatrick, 'Lessons Learned from Iran's Pursuit of Nuclear Weapons', *Nonproliferation Review*, vol. 13, no. 3, November 2006, p. 531.
- 23 See George Perkovich, *Five Scenarios for the Iranian Crisis* (Paris: Institut français des relations internationales, Security Studies Department, Winter 2006), p. 16.
- 24 'Lawmakers Told of Plan to Expand Nuke Program', *Washington Times*, 3 June 2003, p. A14. As Kenneth Waltz puts it, 'if ... the United States says three countries form an axis of evil ... and he proceeds to invade one of them – Iraq – what were Iran and North Korea to think? ... In effect, there is no way to deter the United States other than by having nuclear weapons.' See Scott Sagan, Kenneth Waltz and Richard K. Betts, 'A Nuclear

- Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster?', *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 60, no. 2, Spring–Summer 2007, p. 137.
- <sup>25</sup> US Department of State, 'Country Reports on Terrorism', 28 April 2006, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2005/64337.htm>.
- <sup>26</sup> Iran is the largest country in the Persian Gulf, with a population of 68,492,000 in 2005. The second-largest country is Iraq, with a population of 26,560,000 and the third largest is Saudi Arabia at 23,121,000. See Arthur S. Banks et al. (eds), *Political Handbook of the World: 2007* (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2007), pp. 559, 571 and 1058.
- <sup>27</sup> See 'Question and Answers from Lt. Gen. John Abizaid's U.S. Senate Confirmation Hearing', [Globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2003_hr/abizaid1.pdf), 25 June 2003, [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2003\\_hr/abizaid1.pdf](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2003_hr/abizaid1.pdf), p. 14.
- <sup>28</sup> Testimony of John D. Negroponte to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 'Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence', 2 February 2006, p. 11, <http://ciponline.org/nationalsecurity/news/articles/020206negroponte.pdf>; see also 'Question and Answers from Lt. Gen. John Abizaid's U.S. Senate Confirmation Hearing', [Globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org); and Amir Oren, 'Iran's Successful Missile Test Puts Israel within Range', *Ha'aretz*, 7 April 2003.
- <sup>29</sup> Richard Sokolsky and Ian Lesser, 'Threats to Western Energy Supplies: Scenarios and Implications', in Richard Sokolsky et al., *Persian Gulf Security: Improving Allied Military Contributions* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), p. 11.
- <sup>30</sup> These calculations are based on scarcity and increased transportation costs due to alternate export routes. See David Wyss, 'The Future of Oil: Four Scenarios', *Business Week Online*, 8 August 2006.
- <sup>31</sup> One of many examples is the British and American naval blockade of Germany and Austria-Hungary during the First World War. For more examples see John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), pp. 83–137.
- <sup>32</sup> For a fully developed analysis of 'dispersed swarming' see Fariborz Haghshenass, 'Iran's Doctrine of Asymmetric Naval Warfare', *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 21 December 2006. Aircraft-carrier battle groups are notoriously vulnerable in theatre when compared to other surface combatants and amphibious ships. See Dave Moniz, 'Biggest U.S. Ships Called Vulnerable', *USA Today*, 6 June 2001; Robert Marquand, 'Chinese Build a High-Tech Army within an Army', *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 November 2005.
- <sup>33</sup> See Karim Sadjadpour, 'Iran's Political/Nuclear Ambitions and U.S. Policy Options', Testimony Before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 18 May 2006, <http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2006/SadjadpourTestimony060517.pdf>.
- <sup>34</sup> The Heritage Foundation and *The Wall Street Journal*, '2007 Index of Economic Freedom: Iran', 2007, <http://www.heritage.org/research/features/index/country.cfm?id=Iran>.
- <sup>35</sup> In a BBC World Service poll conducted across 27 nations, Iran was deemed by the majority of respondents to have a 'mainly negative' influence on the world. BBC World Service Poll, 'Israel and Iran Share Most Negative Ratings in Global Poll', [WorldPublicOpinion.org](http://www.worldpublicopinion.org), 23 January 2007.

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