

At War with Syria and Iran: The Neo-Cons May Get Their Wish

By Adil E. Shamoo and Bonnie Bricker | August 10, 2006

With no shame in drawing the U.S. into the Iraq quagmire three-and-a-half years ago, the same group of neo-conservatives including William Kristol, Richard Perle and Charles Krauthammer are pushing for Israel/U.S. go to war with Syria and Iran. What is amazing is that despite the deep mess they got us into in Iraq, President Bush and his foreign policy team is actually listening to them.

Appearing on Fox News Sunday on July 16th, William Kristol claimed that the Bush administration is “coddling” Iran and thus “invited” the current crises in Lebanon. He further opined that, “This is an opportunity to begin to reverse the unfortunate direction of the last six months and get the terrorists and the jihadists back on the defensive.” Back on Fox a few days later, Kristol took another blast from the past wondering what the world would look like with nuclear Iran and suggesting that Iranians would welcome regime change. One can only wonder if Kristol is using the same crystal ball he peered into when he recommended the invasion of Iraq.

The father-figure of the neocons, Richard Perle, was more blunt in his July 22 op-ed in the *New York Times* arguing, “This means precise military action against Hezbollah and its infrastructure in Lebanon and Syria, for as long as it takes and without regard to mindless diplomatic blather about proportionality.”

Writing in Salon.com last week, Sidney Blumenthal noted that neocons on the inside of the administration are on board for broadening the war as well. He wrote, “Neoconservatives on Vice President Dick Cheney’s national security staff and Elliott Abrams, the neoconservative senior director for the Near East on the National Security

Council, are prime movers behind sharing NSA intelligence with Israel.... The neoconservatives are described as enthusiastic about the possibility of using NSA intelligence as a lever to widen the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah and Israel and Hamas into a four-front war.”

The neoconservatives have taken us down this path before. Americans were told that Saddam Hussein was a chief sponsor of terrorism with connections to the 9/11 atrocities. As that argument became less supportable, Americans were told that Saddam had stockpiled WMDs. And as that argument waned, the compassion of Americans was tapped as the rationale of bringing freedom and democracy to Iraq was trumpeted to justify the American lives sacrificed.

The justifications for war proved to be false, leading to the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqis and 2,500 U.S. soldiers along with the loss of U.S. credibility around the world. The calls for widening the war in the Middle East to Iran and Syria are based on equally false assumptions.

While there are clear links between Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran, it is equally clear that widening the wars in the Middle East will only make the U.S. and the region, less safe and secure.



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The neocons are correct in arguing that acts of suicide bombing and kidnapping soldiers by Hamas and Hezbollah can be considered to be acts of war. But spreading the conflict throughout the region will only serve to garner additional support for extremist groups from the Arab populace in the region. These policies will result in recruiting thousands of new terrorists, and increasing the hatred of millions of Arabs and Muslims to U.S. and Israel.

The recent Shi'ite demonstration in support of Hezbollah in Baghdad—the largest in their history and estimated to be from a quarter to one million demonstrators—illustrates this point. The continued conflict in Lebanon no doubt will further complicate the U.S. precarious situation in Iraq and will likely result in more U.S. casualties.

The war with Syria and Iran may not happen tomorrow but rest assured the neoconservatives in Washington will continue to push for a wider war. As President Bush famously said a few years ago, “Fool me once, shame on—shame on you. Fool me—you can't get fooled again.” Let's hope Bush takes a look back at how he got into the mess in Iraq and doesn't get fooled again.

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