

Facing a debacle in Iraq, the US turns for help to Iran

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18 June 2014

With the eruption of civil war in Iraq, the foreign policy of the United States has suffered a shipwreck of massive dimensions, with far-reaching political implications.

On Monday, as Islamist forces increased their control over significant parts of Iraq, US Secretary of State John Kerry turned to Iran for assistance. Washington is “open to discussions” with Tehran, he said, adding that he would “not rule out anything that would be constructive.”

The appeal came as the Obama administration announced a partial evacuation of the US embassy in Baghdad, the largest and most expensive embassy in the world, constructed following the 2003 invasion.

The turn to Iran testifies to the extent of the debacle in Iraq. Just this past February, Kerry was denouncing Iran for continuing to support Syrian President Bashar Al Assad as the US financed an insurgency led by the same Islamic fundamentalist forces currently threatening the Iraqi regime of Nouri al-Maliki. Now Kerry is seeking Iran’s assistance in staving off a disaster in a country the US invaded more than eleven years ago.

For 35 years, since the 1979 Iranian Revolution toppled the Shah, hostility toward Iran has been a central pillar of US policy in the Middle East. During the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, the Reagan administration financed and aided Saddam Hussein against his regional competitor.

In his 2002 State of the Union address, President George W. Bush denounced Iran as part of the “Axis of Evil,” while Washington and its allies made clear that the invasion of Iraq, which took place in 2003, was only a prelude to a US invasion and occupation of Iran. In 2003, a senior British official described the views prevalent in the Bush administration: “Everyone wants

to go to Baghdad. Real men want to go to Tehran.”

Exploiting the issue of Iran’s nuclear program, the US has relentlessly targeted the country, imposing devastating sanctions and working with Israel to murder its scientists and wreak havoc on its industrial infrastructure.

Just one year ago, the Obama administration was on the verge of bombing Syria, in large part for the purpose of further isolating Iran and depriving it of a major ally in the Middle East. In fomenting civil war in Syria, the US and its monarchical Gulf allies backed various Al Qaeda affiliates, including the Sunni extremist Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS). When the defeats suffered by Washington’s far-right Sunni Islamist proxies in Syria drove it to the negotiating table last year, it insisted that Iran could not attend the talks.

While there have been tentative moves toward a rapprochement with Iran since elections last year, the current turn constitutes a stunning reversal.

US foreign policy is collapsing under the weight of the contradictions that have built up over decades of bloody wars across the region. Having recklessly turned to various subsidiaries of Al Qaeda in an attempt to topple Assad, Washington was apparently blindsided when ISIS changed targets, rampaging through Iraq and attacking Washington’s Shiite puppet regime there.

The 2003-2011 US war in Iraq, as pursued by both the Bush and Obama administrations, involved a vast and criminal squandering of human life, American as well as Iraqi. Combined with the US decision to oversee the arming of forces like ISIS, which makes a mockery of Washington’s claims to be fighting a “war on terror” against Al Qaeda, the US subjugation of Iraq has set the stage for a new, even more devastating bloodbath in the Middle East.

It is a well known historical law that regimes that suffer a foreign policy shipwreck like that of the Obama administration become highly vulnerable to the eruption of mass popular opposition within their own countries.

A diplomatic debacle of the type suffered by the United States is the product of a deeply dysfunctional political system, in which a ruling class stupefied by the constant flood of easy money obtained through financial speculation pursues disastrous, short-term policies with total disregard for the consequences. There exists no framework within American politics for the expression of opposition. A total bipartisan consensus has existed in support of the criminal operations of imperialism. The media has functioned as a propaganda agency, cheerleading whatever war was on the agenda.

From the start of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the American ruling class based itself on the belief that all it needed to conquer Iraq was enough ammunition, combined with a willingness to commit the most barbaric acts in the pursuit of its aims. It is now getting its comeuppance, its “rendezvous with disaster” as the *World Socialist Web Site* anticipated.

The tragic encounter of the Iraqi people with American imperialism is by no means over. The ruling class has no shortage of foul and bloody tricks up its sleeve, and US troops, drones and Special Operations Forces have already been sent to preserve what they can. As the Obama administration is considering its options, a fresh invasion of the country is by no means ruled out.

Yet there can be no doubt that the debacle in Iraq will reverberate throughout the world—and above all in the United States. It will intensify political and social tensions and further undermine and discredit the ruling class and all of its institutions in the eyes of the working class.



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