

The U.S. Withdrawal from Iraq

By: Herbert I. London

It is simplistic to assume that if we walk away from a conflict our enemies will do the same

Ironically, after spending our treasure and the blood of our soldiers to create the only working Arab democracy in the Middle East, Iraq's future is now dependent on the actions of our Iranian enemies. President Obama may indeed believe the tide of war is receding, but the events he put in motion could yield a war far more intense than any we have recently encountered.

Iran, since, 1979, has made the point that United States' forces must vacate the region. Their wish is now realized. It is only a question of time before American troops leave Afghanistan as well. The question that remains is: What is in store for this region with hostile regimes, religious friction and nations possessing nuclear weapons, such as Pakistan and most likely Iran?

Every American wants to see our troops at home and war at an end, but we are engaged in a long war with radical Islam that is not likely to disappear because we have lost our appetite for battle. But a long peace, perhaps the word stability applies, is only possible through the demonstration of our strength, our willingness to stay the course.

"After nearly nine years, America's war in Iraq will be over," President Barack Obama announced, stating that the United States would pull its remaining troops out of Iraq by year end. "After nearly nine years, America's war in Iraq will be over," he said.

This claim has a nice political ring to it, but what it really means that even if the U.S. participation in Iraq's war is over, the war goes on. The U.S. withdrawal will probably only exacerbate the violence on the ground.

With the announced U.S. withdrawal, Iran's ability to meddle in Iraqi politics has soared.

For military commanders, including General Lloyd Austin, U.S. Commander in Iraq, the president's hypothesis is questionable, at best. Without a secure,

orderly transition, U.S. successes there have been put at risk. Politics does not tolerate a vacuum.

The Lebanese model that relies on Hezbollah as a political proxy may be the strategy Iran has in mind for Iraq. There are already signs of Iranian influence in the Maliki government, as well as possible pressures from the Islamist cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr, who has been hiding out in Iran. It does not involve high-level strategic thinking to envision a Shiite vassal state with Iran's Quds force operating in the shadows to impose its will on the Iraqi people, not to mention availing itself of their oil.

The U.S. left thousands of troops in Germany after World War II and the U.S. still retains close to 30,000 troops in South Korea in order to maintain stability in this hostile peninsula. These troops were and are deployed to maintain the gains achieved on the battlefield. The same could certainly be said for Iraq. One can only hope that the president's risky decision will not require redeployment of our forces at some time in the future. As the US military has emphatically recommended, there would be sense in retaining a force of 15,000 in Iraq to bolster the Iraqi army. Sadly, that stance has been rejected.

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