

vised Strategy

By Philip Giraldi

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NEOCONSERVATIVES are great observers of war and warriors, though they are sometimes not in complete agreement about the numbering of the conflicts that they send other people's sons and daughters to fight. Norman Podhoretz, the patriarch of the neocons, believes that the Cold War was World War III and that the US is now fighting World War IV against "Islamofascism". He intends to expand World War IV by slating Iran as the next domino to fall to America's military might. Podhoretz undoubtedly sees the current global conflict as something that is good and necessary, both containable and winnable, but as his judgment on Iraq was fallible, his prediction of Iran's rapid destruction is also unreliable. It might be useful to imagine just how war with Iran could play out if the Iranians don't roll over and surrender at the first whiff of grapeshot.

It might start with a minor incident, possibly involving an American Marine patrol operating out of the new base at Badrah near the Iranian border. The Marines are surrounded by superior Iranian forces claiming that the Americans have strayed inside Iranian territory. The Marines refuse to surrender their weapons and instead open fire. The Iranians respond. Helicopter gunships are called in to support the Marines, and artillery fire is directed against Iranian military targets close to the border. President Bush calls the incident an act of war and, in an emotional speech to the nation, orders US forces to attack. A hastily called meeting of the UN Security

Council results in a 17-1 vote urging the United States to exercise restraint, with only Washington voting "no". In the UN General Assembly, only the US, Israel, Micronesia, and Costa Rica support the military action. The US is effectively alone.

In the first few days, overwhelming American air and naval superiority destroy Iran's principal air, naval, and army bases. Iranian Revolutionary Guard facilities are particularly targeted and are obliterated, as are the known Iranian nuclear research and development sites. Population Centres are avoided, though

bombing, with leaders from both parties praising the president and commenting that Iran had it coming.

The Pentagon and White House call the attacks a complete success, but Iran strikes back. With five years to prepare, Iran has successfully hidden and hardened many of its military and nuclear facilities, a large percentage of which are undamaged. The aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower operating in the Persian Gulf is hit by a Chinese Silkworm cruise missile and grounds itself in shallow water to avoid sinking. Three other support vessels are also hit

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smart weapons destroy communications Centres and command and control facilities. There are nevertheless large numbers of civilian casualties and widespread radioactive contamination as many of the targeted sites are in or near cities. Infrastructure is also hit, particularly bridges, roads, and power generation stations close to known nuclear research Centres and military sites. The US media, which had supported the administration's plans to engage Iran, rallies around the flag, praising the surgical attacks designed to cripple Tehran's nuclear weapons programme. Congress supports the

and severely damaged when they are attacked by small craft manned by suicide bombers. Pro-Iranian riots break out in Beirut, where the government is forced to call in soldiers to shoot at the crowds. In the south of Lebanon, Hezbollah fires salvos of rockets into Israel. Israel responds by bombing Lebanon and Syria, which it blames for the attacks. Iranian Shahab-3 missiles also strike Israel, killing a number of civilians. The Israeli Defence Forces are mobilised, and troops are sent to the northern border. Syria and Lebanon also mobilise their forces. Rioters in Baghdad attack US troops and the American

War III may look like

embassy and are driven back only after the soldiers open fire and call in helicopter gunships. Snipers attack American soldiers all over Iraq. Shi'ites sympathetic to Iran sabotage Saudi Arabia's eastern oil fields. The Saudi fields suffer some damage, and hundreds of alleged saboteurs are shot dead by Saudi security forces. An oil tanker out of Kuwait is hit by a Silkworm close to the Straits of Hormuz and runs aground. Another hits a mine planted by Iran. Insurers in London refuse to cover any tankers transiting the Persian Gulf. Oil shipments from the region, one quarter of the world supply, stop completely, and oil goes up to \$200 a barrel. Wall Street suffers its biggest loss in 20 years, with the Dow Jones index plummeting by more than 800 points.

The US offers Iran a cease-fire, which Tehran rejects. Two days later, President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan is assassinated under orders from Tehran. Fearing that he will be next, Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf flees to Dubai. Order breaks down in both countries. The Pakistani army declares a state of emergency. Several leaders in the Pakistani tribal areas that are sheltering Osama bin Laden declare themselves independent. Fighting increases in Iraq with US soldiers being targeted by both leading Shiite militias. US troops evacuate Baghdad, fighting their way out with heavy casualties. There are reports of Iranian soldiers and militiamen massing at the border. Rioters in Basra succeed in cutting the main roads leading to Kuwait that supply US forces.

The US scrambles to contain the damage, pressuring the Pakistani army to put down the riots and secure the country's nuclear arsenal, while at the same time trying to restore order in Kabul through the multinational force. Several NATO allies balk at using their soldiers in what they see as a burgeoning

civil war, and the US suffers heavy losses in street fighting before withdrawing to its bases. Taliban-backed militias take over much of Kabul and Kandahar. Afghanistan's Mazar-i-Sharif, which is largely Shiite, declares itself part of Iran. Waves of Iranian soldiers and militiamen cross the border into Iraq, where they are welcomed by the Iraqi militias. US troops are under siege countrywide and are forced to withdraw into their bases where they can be supplied by air. The Iraqi government resigns and is replaced by a group of Shiite clerics. The government in

home. The Dow Jones index loses another 1,000 points.

The US attempts to get China and Russia to mediate with Iran to end the fighting, but they refuse to do Washington any favours, noting that they had opposed the attack in the first place. Suicide bombers attack London, Washington, New York, and Los Angeles. The attacks are poorly planned and inflict only a few casualties, but panic sets in and the public demands that the respective governments do something. The US tells the Iranian government that unless resistance ceases,

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Lebanon falls and is replaced by a coalition headed by Hezbollah. A salvo of Iranian Silkworm missiles sets the Saudi Arabian eastern oil fields ablaze. Saudi Arabia sends an urgent message to Tehran declaring that it is "neutral" in the fighting and will not assist the US in any way. Kuwait sends the same message, as does Egypt. Kuwait refuses to allow the US to use its men and supplies at Camp Doha against Iran. In Bahrain, rampaging Shiite crowds depose Sheik Khalifa al-Khalifa and set up an Islamic Republic which immediately demands that the US Fifth Fleet dismantle its headquarters and go

nuclear weapons will be used on select targets. India and Pakistan are alarmed by the US threat and put their own nuclear forces on high alert, as does Israel. Russia and China also increase their readiness levels to respond to the crisis.

Iran refuses to concede defeat, and the Iranian people rally around the government. The US public clamours for action. Oil prices continue to surge, and even the long term viability of petroleum supplies is in question as the Straits of Hormuz continue to be closed. Another US ship is sunk by suicide attackers in the Persian Gulf. US troops are under fire nearly everywhere in Iraq and in

Afghanistan. Anti-American rioting takes place in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, and Dhaka. The US consulate general in Karachi, Pakistan, is overrun and sacked. Forty Americans are killed, along with hundreds of Pakistanis. The Pakistani army announces that it can no longer protect Americans. There are frequent terrorism scares in a number of American cities, which are under red alert security lockdown, though there are no new attacks. As a preventive measure, Muslim leaders and some antiwar activists are arrested and detained at military prisons, including Guantanamo. Israel continues to be bombarded from inside Lebanon and Syria. Its air attacks on targets in both countries inflict major damage on civilians but are unsuccessful in stopping the rockets. Rioting rocks the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas flees to Cairo. India threatens to attack Pakistan if there is any question about the security of Islamabad's nuclear arsenal.

The United States uses a neutron-type bomb against the main Iranian nuclear research Centre at Natanz, which it had already bombed conventionally and destroyed. It vows to bomb again if Iran continues to resist. Iran is defiant and fires another wave of Silkworms at US ships, sinking one. Suicide bombers hit US targets in Iraq and Afghanistan. Russia and China place their nuclear forces on high alert. Pakistani militants take over parliament, aided by radical elements in the army and the intelligence service. India launches a preemptive strike against the main Pakistani nuclear Centres at Wah and Multan, where the country's arsenal is believed to be concentrated. Pakistan has hidden some of its nukes elsewhere, however, and is able to strike back by bombing New Delhi. World War III has begun. COURTESY ANTIWAR