

What's Behind Iran's Warning to Syria?

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In a joint-press-conference with Syrian Prime Minister Mohamed Naji al-Otari, Iranian Vice President Parviz Davoudi called on Syria to be "more alert to the enemies' tricks." But the question is; who are these enemies?

Of course the answer will be quickly proposed that this enemy is Israel, but Iran did not warn Syria of Israel with such transparency during the Turkish brokered non-direct negotiation between Tel Aviv and Damascus. Iran did not even do so when there was talk of the possibility of direct negotiations between Syria and Israel, indeed the Gaza War made all observers forget the Syrian announcement of its readiness to enter into direct negotiations with Israel.

In which case why would Tehran give advice, and even more, a public warning, to Damascus now? And why has President Ahmadinejad decided to strengthen ties with Syria [now]? For of course it is no secret that Iran's warning comes at a time that Syrian foreign relations are experiencing a political breath of fresh air.

And so the political doors have opened to Damascus, both internationally and in the Arab world. There is the Saudi rapprochement, and it seems that the Egyptian coolness towards Syria is less than it was, while internationally it seems that Washington has begun with positive steps to test the waters with Syria, and things are progressing.

This is what is new in the Syrian relations with the Arab world and the international community, and it seems that this is what caused the Iranian Vice-President to speak out publicly, contrary to what we have come to expect of the shrewd Iranian policy of media caution with regards to commenting about Syria, or its [other] allies in the Arab region.

Iran's rush to publicly advise Syria of the "enemies' ticks" raises concern over the coming days with regards to the open [battle] fronts in Gaza and Southern Lebanon, especially with the arrival of the far-right into power in Israel. Whatever the Syrians intentions are regarding Arab reconciliation, or their international ties, in the end we must remember that Damascus has interests that it will do the impossible to honor. For with Damascus we are dealing with a government, and not an armed militia such as Hezbollah. This is why Damascus simply cannot afford four or eight years of sharp disputes with Washington, especially since there is a real wind of change with the arrival of Obama to the White House. There is also a new economic reality that Damascus and the Arab world cannot ignore, and stalemate now costs a heavy price.

Tehran is well aware of all of this and is concerned, therefore what is important with regards to the Arab reconciliation brought about by King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz's speech during the Kuwait summit, and the international rapprochement towards Damascus, is not Syria's response, but Iran's.

We have known Iran's reaction to the easing of relations between Syria and the Arab world and the international community since the statement by the Iranian Vice-President, however the question is; what are the practical steps that Tehran will undertake in order to disrupt Arab reconciliation, and Syrian & American rapprochement.

That is what is important.