
Interview: Abolhasan Bani-Sadr

Iran's former President: 'You have created a Frankenstein' in the Gulf

Iran's first President, Abolhasan Bani-Sadr, gave Jacques Cheminade the following interview for *EIR* on Aug. 24. His remarks are noteworthy in their scope as well as in their insight into a process to bring about peace. During the private conversation before the interview, Bani-Sadr, who was President in 1980-81 and now lives in France, stressed two points he considered fundamental.

1) The tragedy of the region is that its countries have become what he calls *exteriorisé*—turned outward to foreign powers or “externalized,” both economically and with respect to their own societies. This is the basic characteristic of Iraq, which has been “externalized” in four ways: a) It is 100% dependent on selling its oil on the world markets, and on technologies and food produced abroad; b) Its army is not a traditional, national “Arab” army, but a military machine, first under British influence, then entirely organized “à la Russia”; c) its social direction, controlled by the Takrits, is not deeply representative of Iraqi society; d) its “Baathist” ideology is a synthesis that leads to a pro-Arab “racism” that has nothing to do with Islam, but is rather an “Arabized” version of Stalinism or Nazism.

In Bani-Sadr's view, it is therefore useless to go to war against Saddam Hussein; if the Anglo-Americans choose to wage such a war, it is for other reasons. Since such an “externalized” regime cannot survive if it is cut off, an embargo would suffice. The military deployment is not directed against Iraq as such, but is a vast Anglo-American maneuver against the whole region, and Europe as well.

2) There are three possible scenarios: the first two, unfortunately, are Anglo-American. The third is European and holds promise.

According to Bani-Sadr, Zbigniew Brzezinski's writings and actions typify the Anglo-American state of mind. For them, the Middle East is an area to “control.” For them, the people are not ready for democracy; they should rather rely on Washington and London. Even more importantly, the Anglo-Americans are convinced that by controlling the oil supply, they can also get Europe and Japan back into line.

Brzezinski is wrong, just as he was wrong about the East bloc countries. His thesis would not even be good for the United States: The constant deployment of American troops

in the Middle East which such a control would require, would make the troops vulnerable to kamikaze attacks, as in Lebanon. What he especially does not understand is that the U.S. economy is incapable of sustaining such a large military operation. Moreover, if the Anglo-Americans' control were to drag on, the Europeans would not fail to react.

Under such conditions, Bani-Sadr sees the following three possible scenarios:

- Direct Anglo-American control of oilfields and NATO deployment into the oil-producing countries. This would assume military confrontation and outright occupation, provoking very violent rejection. There may be some people crazy enough in Washington and London who consider this option, but Bani-Sadr does not consider it the most plausible one today.

- Indirect control of the oilfields: Producer countries would be “neutralized” and surrounded by policing countries, run by assets or agents of the Anglo-Americans. This scenario—consistent with Brzezinski's views—seems to be the one pursued today. The overthrow of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan and establishment of a military government there is coherent with this perspective.

- The European scenario aimed at turning the Middle East into a zone of peace and progress. This is in total contradiction with the Anglo-American plans. Europe is right to be opposed to war. It also has the means to propose an alternative—peace through economic development for all. But to implement such a plan, it must distance itself from the United States or, better still, impose its own views on the United States. However, Europe has not made up its mind to move in such a way; it does not feel strong enough, and is probably not united enough.

Bani-Sadr concluded that he tells his European friends, “Seize the opportunity. Even if you are not perfectly ready, it may never arise again. Our fate, as Near or Middle Easterners, is tied to yours. It depends on your decision.”

EIR: Mr. President, how do you evaluate the present situation in the Gulf? Where are we headed?

Bani-Sadr: Unfortunately, I think we are headed toward war. It is not wise to unleash such a war now, or even in a

longer term. In the short term, it would mean a strike to take out Saddam Hussein. So we should already be thinking of what a post-Saddam era would look like. Who will replace him? Do the Americans have an answer to this question? I do not think so, because Bush came, he gave his press conference, and he said that Saddam is going to fall. It is a pity that no one in the United States asked Mr. Bush the following question: "How could you, as President of a great power, with so many means of information at your disposal, the CIA and others, how could you be fooled by a Middle East head of state? How is it you could not prepare something to prevent Saddam Hussein from moving?"

Nobody asked this question. But now I raise this question with Mr. Bush: "You are preparing all the military means for war. So be it. Have you really thought through your aims, what you are going to try and do in Iraq?" You might want to make a coup d'état against this totalitarian regime, but the nature of such a regime does not change after a coup. It will always have to look externally for what it does not have internally. That is the reason why Saddam invaded Kuwait. "Mr. Bush, do you have the resources in money and food to place at his disposal or do you want him destroyed? The destruction would not end in eliminating Saddam; one has to go all the way and eliminate the very foundations of the regime. Such a regime, which totally depends on outsiders, will take outsiders to destroy it or otherwise assure all it needs to survive. Then, what are you going to do with the region? Do you want to wage nuclear war against everybody in the region? Or do you plan a long war against everybody, because even after Saddam's fall, the rest of the region will have the same problems and needs as before. But, by acting in this way, you will be considered the enemy by everybody, you will be evil incarnate."

From this standpoint nothing can be built, and war is no solution. But history shows that leaders never follow the road of reason.

EIR: So you think the attitude of George Bush and the Anglo-Saxon leaders tends to be irrational?

Bani-Sadr: Yes, it is irrational, because he did not foresee what was coming and is now trying to make up for it in an illogical and irrational way. Everything we are witnessing is a show of force. But that does not constitute a solution. We need long-term solutions, we need the people there to act, that they act on their own. Yet, what does George Bush bring as a message to this people, and to the Arab world? Nothing! For him, his sole objective is to destroy Saddam Hussein, the very man whom Westerners were treating not so long ago as "the bulwark of civilization against Iranian barbarians"—by the way, one of the most ancient people in the world.

You Westerners have created a Frankenstein which is turning against you. History shows us that every time a regime becomes "turned outward," it puts itself at variance with its protecting power. This has happened a thousand

times. . . . Vis-à-vis Mr. Saddam, only two things are needed: The people of the region must know how and when the West will leave it free to take its destiny into its own hands and prepare its future, democratically. There we are on the road to the solution. . . .

EIR: Given the spread of irrationality, what would you do if you were President of Iran today?

Bani-Sadr: If I were President, I don't think Saddam would have attacked Kuwait. He knew I would have immediately entered the war without a minute's hesitation. For Iran, it's more than a question of Kuwait, it's a question of the existence of Iran. It's the same as what I said to the Soviet ambassador when the Russians went into Afghanistan . . . "We cannot accept your presence in Afghanistan because this means the end of Iran." So, therefore, I would have gone to war. But the present Iranian regime does not have the means. That's why I was against continuing the Iran-Iraq war, and I maintained that the war should stop as soon as Iraq accepted defeat.

But the essential point is that this region is made up of small military forces woven into one piece by English colonial policy. Can you accept, if you are the people of this region, to live in poverty, even in hunger, while your leaders manipulate enormous sums of money? The Sheikh of Kuwait invested \$200 billion in the West: How much of that did he put into Pakistan, for example? How much into Iran? How much into the other Arab countries? There's the problem. By tackling this, we can find a lasting solution to the crisis. I think it's the West that is preventing it. Leaders like the Sheikh of Kuwait must decide whether or not they are part of the region. Or rather, he belongs to the region and all his oil belongs to the region.

My idea is that we should set up a common fund with oil income which would be fairly distributed for regional development. There's the solution, and if it had been done, Saddam would have had no pretext for invading Kuwait.

EIR: Mr. Lyndon LaRouche has proposed that peace and democracy be assured for the whole region through a mutual economic development plan in the Middle East, based on water, "greening" the deserts, and urbanization. This plan contrasts with the attempts to control and manipulate raw materials—water, food, oil—the policy of the financial cartels. What do you think of LaRouche's approach and of the political means to carry it through?

Bani-Sadr: I totally agree with this approach. We started to do that with the Iranian Revolution. It was working quite well. But Mr. Kissinger stated that the United States would not be able to accept a second Japan in the region. The problems we have come from abroad, since all the countries in our region are externalized.

The first act, thus, would be to "internalize," to nationalize these states. There are no more nation-states. Take Iran

for example: We made a revolution against a regime dominated by the Pahlavi dynasty. . . . This family became royal, by the grace of the English. Then, it was the United States who forced themselves on Europe by controlling the oil supply and by getting rid of the patriot Mossadegh. . . . I am the first elected official of the Iranian people. The Americans organized my elimination . . . in order to regain control of the oil. . . .

On the ideological level, there was the famous ideology the U.S. manufactured for the Third World: In case of war . . . the best organized part of society, the army, should take power to ensure the safety of the free world. This had nothing to do with Iranian reality! Why have an armed regime? All this, to defend the United States! How do you explain and legitimize such an ideology? That's why we made the revolution. After the revolution, we tried to nationalize the state, to internalize it, by changing the structure of the budget and of imports, by investing in internal improvements, by changing the ideology. The revolution was based on four axioms: independence, freedom (implying democracy), progress, and Islam inasmuch as it's an expression of this faith, as a cultural element. Everything was going well. Who imposed war upon us? The outside. . . .

When I was President, we had been informed that Mr. Brzezinski had traveled to Iraq to suggest to Saddam Hussein that he launch a war against Iran.

Here in Versailles, an American came to see me. He told me that Brzezinski was in fact the author of that strategy, but that it was not he who had concretely worked out the plans for it. Two weeks ago, an Iraqi, probably sent by Saddam Hussein, specified that it was not Brzezinski who had intervened but rather the U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Mr. Giscard d'Estaing. So, outsiders forced us by war to abandon what we were in the process of accomplishing. Mr. Kissinger's fears were justified because we had indeed proven that development was possible. . . .

This plan of LaRouche's is excellent, but, as you know, the state has a strategic role in development. The most serious problem is not the physical desert but the desert in our societies, I mean the failure of the state. It's that we have to change, otherwise called "nationalize," done in such a way that the components of the state become more internalized. It will never happen, obviously, that things will be 100% internal. This is also worthwhile for the United States. That's the best solution for them, since, when you look at them close up, they are so externalized that one has to ask if they are still a nation-state.

EIR: Do you think Europe and Japan might change their position now that they have different interests, even opposed to those of Bush and Thatcher? And that perhaps, France, Germany, and Japan are trying to give aid toward, in peace and democracy, having nation-states become developed in the Near and Middle East?

Bani-Sadr: It is true there are many changes, but this time, it is to ourselves I would rather address myself. If we do not manage to set up, in our countries, the conditions required to realize a development plan, how could you expect that this could happen from abroad? What we ask, is that the foreign countries leave these states alone, that's all. Nothing more is needed. Once the people are reassured that the West has truly left these states alone, you'll see how quickly injustice will disappear. It cannot be maintained. Who really wants to keep the mullahs in power in Iran? The West, everybody knows it! Let it abandon its interventions. . . . Then I think public opinion and states would accept such a development plan. Moreover, we have to control the crazies in Israel by having them participate in the development.

EIR: Can you say a word about the role of France, which might be able to speak in the name of Europe and might have more freedom of movement than other European states?

Bani-Sadr: . . . The Germans, the Japanese have a thousand times more means than the French, economically. . . . France intellectually and politically [is more willing], on condition that it not act like an adolescent that takes fright that a power like Germany might do something. I want to say to the French people that if they don't work at it, they will always be dominated. If a people wants to talk in the name of Europe, they have to be sincere, speak in clear language with their own people, without worrying who might win or lose the election. Now is a decisive moment in the history of our peoples. The truth must be spoken. . . .

When I was in office, I proposed that Europe should stop using the dollar and use a set of currencies. It was in the general interest and perhaps it could have even solved the problem of the dollar. But Europe dared not do it. . . .

A Europe that depends on Middle East oil, which wants to stay out of the American and Russian empires, has every interest in supporting progress and peace in the region, such that there would be no more destabilization in the price and the ability to produce oil. So why doesn't Europe do anything? Why does she let the U.S. take the initiative? Can you imagine, if France had taken the initiative and had showed itself to be first on site, rather than the U.S.A.? Things would have been totally changed. And rationality, along with progress and peace, would have been established in the region. But, Europe is abstaining. To have the means is not enough. It is time to get out of this inferiority complex left over from the Second World War. Besides, as you know, the English are always there to control Europe and they prefer to act together with their American cousins. So we should speak of a continental Europe that must act. It has the means, but up to now, it had not been capable of mobilizing them. . . .

EIR: Don't you think that by controlling the oil, the Anglo-Americans are trying to compensate for their economic weakness by imposing themselves on Europe?

Bani-Sadr: . . . By appearances, it certainly is like that; not in reality. Do you think that Europe would be economically destroyed if the U. S.A. prevented the flow of oil: Is that the way the problems of America's economy would be solved? It would aggravate them, because the American economy is internally sick. Americans have to act at home, internally. We are going into a new phase of human history, because the revolutions in East Europe have reversed the dominant tendency which used to bring their internal problems to a resolution by artificially carrying them outside. However, history has changed course. . . .

EIR: Your approach reminds me of someone you know, who is presently an attorney for Lyndon LaRouche, although he does not share the same political ideas: Ramsey Clark. What do you think of the emergence in the United States of a movement which is demanding this preservation of a certain American way of life that is in the process of being destroyed? What do you think of this movement that is coming into being in the United States?

Bani-Sadr: This kind of movement is necessarily growing, everywhere in the world. Colonialist ideology ceased in the 1960s, but the colonialist movement has continued up to this day. This movement claims that things can be changed from the outside; that is colonialism, and that is what is failing everywhere. All those mental, administrative, social, and economic structures which used to exist in the dominant countries on a world scale have got to change. So, what do they do to avoid changing? By sending states off into adventures abroad. That is what Khomeini did in Iran on a small scale, what Saddam is doing today on a large scale, or what Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Bush are doing on a grand scale, on the planetary level. They want to slow things down, but they are heading for total destruction. One can see that many people are being destroyed, because of this failure to understand the necessity for change. That is the reality of our time. Today, it is no longer possible to impose a model upon others: That was the colonialist thesis. One has declared that the result was contrary to expectations, after the world system of development failed in turn. We have had an experience in Iran from which we have found the solution: change things from the inside. There are no others, not only for the dominated countries but also for the dominant ones. I am giving you an economic and sociological explanation of it. . . .

It was thus that Khomeini's men came looking for the Americans and proposed to them the defeat of Iran in order to throw out the radicals and install the moderates. It was therefore the dominated people who proposed to the dominating people to bring them a solution by force. . . .

EIR: Which gave Iran an Irangate regime.

Bani-Sadr: Exactly.

Now, look at things from the standpoint of the dominating forces. There are driving forces found within American

society, and plenty of others: capital, know-how, raw material, energy—all this comes from the rest of the world. This has made the U.S. the most indebted in the world, absolutely dependent on the rest of the world. . . .

EIR: Among these forces, there is a supreme good, which is people and the moral and intellectual quality of people. In an interview with the Italian daily *Avvenire*, you mention a tendency of American policy to enforce population wars. What do you mean by that, and isn't there a danger that the East-West conflict turns into a North-South confrontation?

Bani-Sadr: Let's say that the Westerners having not been able to solve their population problem, given that the driving forces, perverted to destructive use, are preventing the renewal of their population. With us, poverty has caused a problem of overpopulation with respect to available resources. Certain crazy people in the West say, "We must solve this problem." How? "By using all the destructive means: bombs, chemical weapons, etc. We have to get rid of overpopulation by eliminating the excess." Me, I say to these fools, trying to appeal to whatever reason they have left, that this overpopulation comes from poverty. . . .

EIR: What message would you like to transmit to those who, in the United States and Europe, are fighting for economic development, peace, democracy, and policy of defending the nation-state in the countries of the South, as well as in their own countries?

Bani-Sadr: My message is, "Do not despair. Do not become discouraged." The period of externalization is finished. All models based on it are destroyed. The Soviet model is finished, the model of the "American way of life" [in English] is finished. This is a period of internalization. Certainly, there will be many forces that will have nostalgia for the old order. They will resist. They create crises everywhere in the world, but this is their end. Compare what is happening today, where everyone must go into the Gulf to counter Saddam Hussein, to what would have happened 20 years ago. A simple telephone call from the President or the CIA director would have sufficed for a regime to disappear. Today, you see this is not the case. Even against the regime of Saddam, one of the most externalized, it is not easy to intervene. With other more internalized regimes, this would even be much more difficult. The time is over when one can decide from outside that was good for everybody. The reality of our times must be accepted: Each society must find its own solution from within, and let there be at the same time a cooperation, a collaboration among nations. Now is our time. I think that one has won. We are only witnessing the final throes of the old regimes. We must not become discouraged by those people there, by these crisis in the Middle East. These are the peoples who must find their solutions.

There is no other solution than what you are proposing. That is why we must not become discouraged, but rather quite the opposite!