
Mohammad el-Sayed Selim

Dancing with Wolves: But Iran Will Be Next

Prof. Mohammad el-Sayed Selim is Professor of Political Science at Cairo University. He submitted this written speech to the March 2 EIR seminar in Berlin. Subheads have been added. See last week's EIR for further seminar discussion of the issues raised here, notably that of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Reading the history of the Middle East during the last century, shows that the Arabs have committed two major strategic and fateful errors of judgment. These judgments have been shaping the course of events in the region since the end of the First World War. Both errors of judgment were rooted in the inability to distinguish between short-term and long-term gains and losses. Major strategic decisions were based only on short-term expectation of gains, which turned out to be long-term net losses.

The first major error was the decision of Sherif Hussein in 1915 to ally with Britain and France against the Ottoman Empire, hoping that he would become the head of a new Arab kingdom in the Arab East and Hijaz. What he got was the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration, the partition of the Arab East, and most importantly, the rift in Arab-Turkish relations which has been indelibly imprinted for generations.

The second main strategic error was committed when the Arabs sided with the Reagan Administration in its quest to defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan. The Arabs were out to join the United States in defeating the communists, to capitalize on the expected gains from Reagan. The Arabs sent fighters (Mujahideen who turned into terrorists later on), and the Americans armed and trained them. What resulted was the Soviet defeat and collapse, the emergence of the United States

as the sole superpower, and the Muslim world itself becoming the new target, as articulated in the Clash of Civilizations argument. The Arabs and the developing countries had been somehow protected by the superpower competition. Now, with such competition over, there was no need to give any concessions, or to show any sign of friendship, as [former Malaysian Prime Minister] Mahathir bin Mohammad, the wise man of Asia, has repeatedly said. Furthermore, the sole superpower left the Mujahideen armed to the teeth, to fight among themselves to the bitter end. The former Minister of Interior of Pakistan, Mr. Moun Uddin Haider, once said that 1.5 million Muslims were killed in the Afghan War to get one result, that is, that the United States became the only superpower in the world.

The Sept. 11 attacks were mysteriously orchestrated by the neo-conservative Administration in Washington as a cover for the implementation of the already drafted plans to dominate the Middle East. Still that lesson was not learnt, as the Bush Administration began to proceed with its plans after Sept. 11, 2001 to invade, occupy, and eventually control some key states in the Middle East under the pretext of fighting terrorism. This time it was Iran which tried to capitalize on these plans, to get rid of some its neighboring rivals, the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. One Iranian spokesman was quite sincere when he put it bluntly that, without Iran's support, the United States would not have been able to occupy Afghanistan and Iraq. Iran played with the wolf, hoping that the wolf would turn a blind eye on her. But the wolf never turns a blind eye on prey. As soon as Wolfowitz put his grip on Afghanistan and Iraq, Iran had to be next. Iran had to pay the price for playing with the wolf. Once again, history repeated itself.

Nuclear Program Is Pretext To Attack Iran

But history is also repeating itself again today. The political environment in the region today, is reminiscent of the environment there in the period prior to the invasion of Iraq. Just as the question of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction was given the utmost priority, and presented as a major threat that should be immediately dealt with, and as the question of the linkage between Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and terrorism was presented as an immediate threat, the Iranian nuclear question is now being presented in the same context. The neo-conservatives are also spreading words of fear in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, saying that the Iranian nuclear program is an existential threat to them. Although Iran has been building the Bushehr nuclear plant for the last 15 years, suddenly it has become a major threat to the ecosystem in the Gulf.

They are also exerting maximum pressure on Arab countries to join ranks with them against Iran. Suddenly, a new idea was circulated among the GCC countries, that is, to establish an "Arabian Gulf nuclear free zone," thereby bypassing the notion of the "Middle East" as a nuclear free zone.



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Professor Selim of Cairo University addresses an EIR conference in Berlin last Summer.

Whereas the Arabian Gulf proposal targets Iran only, the Middle East would include Iran and Israel. But the name of the game now is to reinforce Israel's nuclear monopoly in the Middle East, a point to which we will return later.

The neo-conservatives have already taken a strategic decision to end the regime of the Iranian Islamic Republic, and the question now is, how the scenario will unfold. In January 2005, I took part in a conference sponsored by a leading research center located in the Arabian Gulf region. An American participant, who is very close to the neo-conservatives in Washington, delivered a blunt message to the Arab audience: "America will attack Iran, and we want to know, what are you going to do in this case?" Although the neo-conservatives are trapped in the Iraqi and Afghani quagmires, they base their calculations on their estimations of the likely responses of other powers, especially Russia and China, the Iranian capabilities in the regional strategic environment, their presence in the immediate neighboring environment of Iran, and the expected gains from ending the Iranian Islamic regime. This leads to the conclusion that an attack on Iran of some sort is most likely to occur in 2006. The ongoing negotiations are diplomatic steps to prepare the theater for what is to come. They are a prelude to the war, not an alternative to it. One must remember that the issue is not the Iranian nuclear program, but

the Iranian Islamic regime, which represents the last challenge to the long-term American hegemony in the Middle East. Once this challenge were dealt with, all the other chips, such as Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas, would fall into place.

War Throughout the Region Will Result

The scenario for an attack on Iran will certainly be different from the Iraqi one. Most likely, as was documented by *EIR*'s reports, mini-nukes could be used to frighten the Iranians into quick surrender. But other scenarios could also be thought of.

But in all cases, the road to Tehran will carry a major cost. Iran is likely to turn the entire region into a battleground by virtue of its long-range missile capabilities, and mostly loyal Shi'ite communities in the Arabian Gulf region. Furthermore, Arab countries have so far withstood American pressures to rally against Iran. The last GCC summit held in Abu Dhabi called for establishing a nuclear free zone in the *Middle East*, although the neo-conservatives were exercising pressures to restrict the call to the Gulf region. The resolution of the GCC was almost a slap in the face to the neo-conservatives. This may be an indication that the Arabs are beginning to learn the lessons of history, and drawing lessons from their past miscalculations.

No one in the Arab world believes the rhetoric of Iran, respecting its international obligations under the NPT. Israel and North Korea today are nuclear powers. They are both outside the NPT regime. Nevertheless, the neo-conservatives are exercising continuous pressure on North Korea to denuclearize, but there has been no word said about Israel. The argument that Israel is not an NPT party has been blown by North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT. The fact that North Korea is outside that regime has not saved her from American encroachments, but the same argument is used to justify leaving Israel outside any controls. In fact, we believe that if the American scenario against Iran were to succeed, the next step would be a new drive to legitimize an Israeli nuclear monopoly in the Middle East by declaring Israel, India, and possibly Pakistan, as legitimate nuclear powers under the NPT regime; that is, they would join the NPT, but as nuclear powers.

The Arabs have also seen Security Council resolutions issued under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter being ignored, because they touch upon Israel's nuclear monopoly in the region. I am here referring to Article 14 of Security Council Resolution 687, issued in 1991 on ceasefire terms with Iraq. That Article stipulated that the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction would be a prelude to declaring the Middle East as an area free from weapons of mass destruction. However, no single action was taken to enforce that Article.

This conference should bring to the attention of the world, Security Council Resolution 687 on the Middle East as an area free of weapons of mass destruction. This resolution is the key to resolving the present crisis, if the "real" issue is Iran's nuclear capabilities. Although Iran denies that its nu-

clear program is for military use, its potential quest to develop nuclear warheads could be understood in the light of Israel's possession of such weapons. When one party develops nuclear capabilities, this becomes a license for others to do likewise. In fact, that is what the Western theory of nuclear deterrence bluntly says. When the U.S.A. declared its nuclear capability in 1945, the Soviet Union did likewise in 1949; and when China developed its nuclear capability in 1965, India followed suit in 1974; and when India exploded a device in 1998, Pakistan followed. Western nuclear deterrence theory tells us, it is the nuclear balance of terror that deters aggression, rather than nuclear monopoly. When the U.S.A. monopolized nuclear weapons, it used them against Japan, but it never thought of using them against the Soviet Union, once it had developed the same weapons in 1949. One can understand the Indo-Pakistani recent rapprochement in light of the balance of terror in South Asia, and the Israeli determination to subjugate the Arabs, partly in the light of its nuclear monopoly.

Peace can only be maintained if there is a balanced correlation of forces among the parties. Engaging Israel in the present nuclear debate in the region would create a major momentum for solving the Iranian question. Once all the parties shoulder equal responsibilities regarding the NPT regime, the motives to go nuclear will certainly disappear. I am not sure if this line of thinking will be heard by the wolves in Washington. This question is dominating the region, and reinforcing the nuclear monopoly of their ally in the region, instead of equal commitments. Iran should learn from lessons of the past. Dancing with the wolves has not saved it. It was recently revealed that before the invasion of Iraq, the Iraqi government offered Iran an alliance, but Iran ignored the offer. It should also learn from its past diplomatic miscalculations. Negotiating with the European Troika outside the IAEA was a major error, as it created new commitments for Iran outside those under the NPT, and enabled the Troika to claim that Iran had violated its agreements with it, not the NPT. It should also prepare for the worst. Not only Iran, but the entire region.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to Lyndon LaRouche for his strong interest in a just peace in the Middle East. He and his able staff have been launching a campaign to expel the wolves into the wild.

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