

A NATO for the Middle East?

Israel and Frontline Arab States Join Hands

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After the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq the U.S. and British governments gave up their excuses about bringing democracy to the people of the Middle East and started slowly talking about their strategic interests in the region. Fighting terrorism and bringing democracy were mere pretexts for military assaults. The Anglo-American game plan exposed itself in the summer of 2006 after the Israeli aerial siege of Lebanon. France and Germany were also implicated in the Anglo-American designs and the whole venture began to appear as a combined project, with NATO representing all four powers.

By the summer months of 2007, William M. Arkin, a columnist on security issues for *The Washington Post*, stated that the U.S. government had started the process of creating a NATO-like military alliance in the Middle East against Iran and Syria. [1] The basis for Arkin's claims were the major, and very public, steps taken by the Bush Jr. Administration to demonize Iran and Syria in 2007 and to classify or divide the Middle East into two different camps, "moderates" and "radicals." [2] According to Arkin:

The new military alliance even has a temporary name: GCC+2. Yesterday [July 31, 2007], Rice and Gates met [for security and policy meetings regarding the Middle East] with the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council of six nations: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates — plus Egypt and Jordan. [3]

Although Tel Aviv was (deliberately) not mentioned due to the sensitivities of the Arab public, Israel is a partner within the framework of such an alliance. In July 2009, the international reports of the voyage of Israeli Dolphin submarines, which are capable of carrying nuclear weapons, through the Suez Canal as a veiled threat to Iran and as part of Israeli preparations for a war against Tehran illustrate the level of cooperation between these states and Israel. [4]

The Middle East: The Resistance Bloc versus the Coalition of the Moderate

The logistical process of marshalling together the network of existing U.S. allies and clients in the Middle East within an alliance against Iran and Syria started in 2006 after the Israeli defeat in Lebanon. Following the Israeli failure in Lebanon, the U.S. government started arming Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the forces of Mahmoud Abbas, and the groups with militias in the March 14 Alliance of Lebanon with secret weapons shipments or through large weapon deals. [5] These players were all grouped together, along with Israel and Turkey, as the "*Coalition of the Moderate.*"

George W. Bush's speech on Iraq in 2007 was an announcement that the U.S. intended to build a coalition against Iran, Syria, and all the regional players and forces that resisted the White House's "New Middle East." The intricate ties of the mainstream media (and the individual interests that both own and control them) to U.S. foreign policy were confirmed by the media aspects of the process and the timing of opinion pieces calling for the expansion of NATO into the Middle East or the creation of a NATO-like alliance in the region. *Time Magazine*, on queue with George W. Bush's speech on Iraq, published an article calling for a NATO in the Middle East. [6]

The Arab League's March 2007 summit in Saudi Arabia also served to cultivate the conditions for dividing the region into a so-called bloc of "moderates" and a so-called Iranian-led bloc of "radicals." [7] The major regional tours of Condoleezza Rice and Robert Gates in 2007 were also defining moments in this process. Condoleezza Rice, while en route to the Middle East via Ireland, told reporters, "There isn't a doubt, I think, that Iran constitutes the single most important, single-country challenge to...[American] interests in the Middle East and to the kind of Middle East that we [meaning the U.S. government] want to see." [8]

The so-called "moderates," such as Saudi Arabia, in the Middle East are those players who have sided with the plans to establish a "new regional order" or the "New Middle East." The so-called "radicals" are really those players resisting foreign influence and control, for their own different reasons, over their lands and thus are a loose-knit "*Resistance Bloc*." For this reason a diverse league of players are included in the Resistance Bloc: theocrats and secularists; Arabs, Armenians, Assyrians, Turkic peoples, and Iranians; Christians of various confessions from the Eastern Orthodox to various Catholics, Druze, and Muslims of various denominations; nationalists and pan-Arabists; reformists, liberals, and conservatives; Baathists, socialists, communists, and various religious political groups.

The Iraqi Resistance, most Palestinian organizations, the Lebanese National Opposition, Iran, and Syria are all categorized together within this bloc of players opposed to the agenda being pursued by America and its partners. This grouping is significantly propped up by Iran, either directly or indirectly. By way of their opposition to the U.S. and its allies they are preventing the move into Eurasia and hegemonic control of Middle Eastern oil resources.

The Resistance Bloc within the Context of Eurasian Resistance

The Resistance Bloc is merely the regional arm of the broader Eurasian alliance formed by Russia, China, and Iran against the U.S. and its allies (the *Periphery*). Iran and Syria are also the link between the non-state players in the Middle East and Moscow and Beijing. To support the Resistance Bloc, Russia has been aiding Iran and Syria and even maintains naval bases off the Syrian coast.

Moscow also aided the Lebanese during the 2006 war against Israel through providing Hezbollah with information about Israeli military movements. [9] There have also been serious talks, which are being stalled by the Hariri-led March 14 Alliance, about the Russians and Iranians arming the Lebanese military. [10] The Kremlin has also refused to stop having contacts with Hamas and other Palestinian organizations and with Hezbollah and its political allies in Lebanon. The Russians have also categorically warned several times that they will not accept a war against Iran.

Following in the Footsteps of the Baghdad Pact and CENTO?

The formation of a NATO in the Middle East would not only be targeted against Iran, Syria, and their regional allies, but would also be part of a larger equation aimed at targeting Russia and China in Eurasia. In this regard, the formation of a NATO-like military alliance would not be new to the Middle East. In the past, the U.S. had been actively involved in the creation of both the Baghdad Pact or the Middle East Treaty Organization (METO) and later the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), which was created after the 1958 revolution in Iraq resulted in an Iraqi withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact.

The organization of these alliances, especially CENTO, were designed alongside that of the organization of NATO and aimed at encircling the Soviet Union from the most relatively central location of Eurasia, as well as keeping other Middle Eastern states in balance. While the Baghdad Pact and CENTO formed a central military belt in Eurasia, NATO formed a military belt around the western and northern peripheries of Eurasia and the Soviet Union. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) did the same from the eastern and southern peripheries of Eurasia, the Soviet Union, and China. All three military organizations were inter-linked through states that had more than one membership, which were Pakistan (in CENTO and SEATO), Britain (in NATO, CENTO, and SEATO), the U.S. (in NATO and SEATO), Turkey (NATO and CENTO), and France (in NATO and SEATO).

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NOTES

[1] William M. Arkin, A New Mideast Military Alliance? *The Washington Post*, July 31, 2007; William M. Arkin, Middle East Alliance 2.0., *The Washington Post*, August 1, 2007.

[2] Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, America's "Divide and Rule" Strategies in the Middle East, *Centre for Research on Globalization* (CRG), [January 17, 2008](#).

[3] Akin, A New Mideast, *Op. cit.*

[4] Sheera Frenkel, Israeli navy in Suez Canal prepares for potential attack on Iran, *The Times* (U.K.), [July 16, 2009](#).

[5] Mohamed Darwish, US peace policy for the Gulf: divide and conquer, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, no. 857, [August 9-15, 2007](#).

[6] Walter Isaacson, A NATO for the Middle East, *Time Magazine*, [January 26, 2007](#).

[7] Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, War and the "New Middle East:" US Coalition Building and the Arab League, *Centre for Research on Globalization* (CRG), [April 9, 2008](#); originally published by *Payvand* (April 7, 2008).

[8] Iran 'biggest threat to Mid-East,' *British Broadcasting Corporation News* (BBC News), [July 31, 2007](#).

[9] Ze'ev Schiff, Syria, Iran intelligence services aided Hezbollah during war, *Haaretz*, [October 3, 2006](#).

[10] Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, Israel's Next War: Today the Gaza Strip, Tomorrow Lebanon? *Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG)*, [January 17, 2009](#).

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