

“COMMON MISSILE DEFENSE SHIELD” AGAINST IRAN...? The US is Arming the Gulf. Against Whom?

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On Saturday, the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, on her visit to Saudi Arabia, attended the first Strategic Cooperation Forum between the U.S. and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The six countries comprising the GCC are Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman.

The most important outcome of the session on Saturday was the decision to establish a common missile defense shield against Iran.

Now, the issue is really worth looking deeper into.

At first sight, establishing a missile defense shield in the Gulf area seems at least a little bit more logical than establishing a similar shield in Poland, Czech Republic, Romania or elsewhere in Eastern Europe. That is, if the shield is really targeted at a possible threat coming from Iran.

On the other hand, a decision to launch such kind of a shield at this particular moment, when it is Iran's turn to be scared of a possible attack – be it from the U.S. or from Israel – breaks the above logic. But the logic is restored when we look at the problem from another angle.

In fact, for any unbiased outside observer it became clear a long time ago that the real purpose of the whole U.S. activity around Iran is not aimed at diverting any kind of threat, either nuclear or missile. The real purpose is regime change. And this explains both the U.S.' desire to overthrow Iran's last remaining ally – the Assad regime in Syria, and the close relationship with the Gulf monarchies.

Against the background of the U.S. crackdown on Assad, Ms. Hillary's references to democracy at the Saturday's Forum seem ridiculous. She expressed "regret" about the UAE's March 28 raid on the offices of several foreign pro-democracy groups, including a U.S. organization, the National Democratic Institute.

Also, if we remember the events of spring 2011 in Bahrain, when the ruling Sunni regime launched a bloody crackdown of Shiite protesters, the case went almost unnoticed in the U.S. The reason was that Bahrain serves as one of the most important bases for the U.S. Fifth Fleet.

Definitely, other Gulf monarchies can hardly be called exemplary democracies. But it's OK with the U.S. when it comes to protecting them against Iran.

The question is who is to benefit? On the one hand, it gives the U.S. new opportunities for selling their weapons to the stalwarts of democracy in the Gulf region. But, on the other hand, one cannot get rid of the impression that the whole wave of the so called "revolutions" in the Middle East initiated in Tunisia in December 2010 and having Iran as its ultimate aim serves the interests of only one geopolitical player in the region – that is Saudi Arabia with its satellites.

This explains why the regime changes in several Arab countries where the revolutions succeeded have not led to a triumph of democracy, but rather to a triumph of Islamists. This explains why, stirred up by the radical Sunni regime in Saudi Arabia, the West is so preoccupied with picking on Shiite Iran and trying to overthrow the Alawi-dominated regime in Syria.

The only thing Ms. Hillary and the U.S. administration are not taking into account is the fact that playing with such willful players can backfire in an unpredictable way.

When the nationalities of the 9/11 hijackers were revealed, it turned out that 15 out of 19 were Saudi nationals, with four others coming from UAE (two), Egypt and Lebanon (one each). Yet the U.S. preferred to soft pedal the issue, choosing instead a mythical Al Qaeda and the unfortunate Taliban as the main culprits.

It should also be remembered that Al Qaeda was created by the U.S. as a tool against the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Now the U.S. seems to be going for the same mistake, arming a temporary ally that has all the prerequisites for turning the arms in an unpredicted direction.

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