

## **America's "divide and rule" strategies in the Middle East**

*By Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya  
Global Research, 17 January 2008*

### **The presidential tour of George W. Bush to the Middle East: A new Cold War?**

In 1946, Winston Churchill delivered his "Iron Curtain" speech in Missouri that helped set the rhetorical stance for the rivalry between the two camps or poles respectively formed by the Soviet Union and the United States after the Second World War.

Starting in 2006, the Middle East has been depicted in a similar way by the White House and 10 Downing Street. In the end, history will decide and give its verdict on the miniature version of the Cold War now unfolding in the Middle East.

It is no secret that the 2008 presidential tour of George W. Bush Jr to the Middle East is more about rallying hostility and antagonism against Iran and those forces resisting Washington's political and socio-economic curriculum for the Middle East. The US President's tour is part of an exhorted effort to replace Israel with a vilified Iran as a looming threat to the Arab World. This undertaking which is part of America's Project for a "New Middle East" was initiated after Israel's war against Lebanon in July of 2006.

### **Balkanisation and the Muslim Divide: Shi'a Muslims versus Sunni Muslims**

In relationship to the preparations for creating the "New Middle East" there have been attempts, with partial success, to deliberately create divisions within the populations of the Middle East and Central Asia through ethno-cultural, religious, sectarian, national, and political differentiations.

Aside from fuelling ethnic tensions, such as those between Kurds and Arabs in Iraq, a sectarian divide is being deliberately cultivated within the ranks of the people of the Middle East which consider themselves Muslims. This divide is being fostered between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims.

These divisions have been fuelled by the US, British, and Israeli intelligence apparatus. The intelligence agencies of Arab regimes within the Anglo-American orbit have also been involved in the construction of these divisions. This divide is also being cultivated with the help of various groups and leaders in these respective communities.

Before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the rulers of the Arab League countries were aware that the US and Britain intended to redraw the borders of the Middle East. It was openly mentioned at the summit of Arab rulers being held in Egypt prior to the Anglo-American invasion.

The interests of many of the corrupt Arab elites, the self-proclaimed cream of the crop within the Arab World, and autocratic Arab authorities have historically conformed and adhered to Anglo-American and Franco-German political and socio-economic interests.

The House of Saud, the Hariri clan of Lebanon, and the absolute rulers established throughout the Arab World all share common financial and economic links with the Project

for the “New Middle East.” They have a vested interest in the promotion of the economic and political model that the US wishes to entrench in the Middle East.

### **The “Shi’a Crescent” and the phantom Iranian conquest of the Middle East**

To create hostility within the Muslim populations of the Middle East, Iran is being portrayed as the vanguard of Shi’a expansionism in the region, vis-à-vis the so-called “Shi’a Crescent,” and Saudi Arabia portrayed as the champion of the Sunni Muslims.

The truth of the matter is that Iran does not represent all the Shi’a Muslims nor does Saudi Arabia represent all the Sunni Muslims; these efforts are part of the politicising of religious faith, which serves US foreign policy goals. It also contributes to misleading public opinion throughout the Middle East.

This animosity between peoples of Muslim faith and the populations of the Middle East has been created to justify animosity against Iran and those perceived to be in the same camp as Iran, such as Syria and Hezbollah.

Arab leaders also have an easier time controlling their populations when they are fighting against each other and are consequently weakened as a result of sectarian and ethnic divisions. The latter also create confusion within the various populations, distract them from their problems at home, and projects their animosity towards their leaders on others. Fear or anger towards the “Other” or the “Outsider” has always been a form of manipulating large groups and whole segments of societies.

With the peoples of the region divided against each other, their resources can be controlled and they themselves governed and further manipulated with greater ease. This has been part of the objective of British and American foreign policy all along. In this effort, local rulers and foreign forces have been partners.

### **“The Coalition of the Moderate” in the Middle East and the manipulation of the Arabs**

“We must clandestinely co-operate with Saudi Arabia so that it also persuades the US to strike Iran.”—Brigadier-General Oded Tira, Israeli military.

“Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them.” The historical context of this statement is very significant. This admission was made during the First World War in the Middle East when the British were fighting against the Ottoman Turks with the help of the Ottoman’s rebellious Arab subjects. The Arab’s help was insured through false promises and London’s deception. What was being revealed by this interlocutor of British policy was British forces should not do most the active fighting in the Middle East and let the Arabs fight Britain’s war against the Turks.

Revealing the author, these were the words of a man who has been inscribed into the pages of history as a legendary figure and as a hero to the Arabs. In reality he was an agent of British imperialism that misled the Arabs with the help of corrupt local leaders. His name was Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Edward Lawrence or, as most people know him, “Lawrence

of Arabia.”

The 27 Articles of T. E. Lawrence (20 August 1917) is where these words can be found for all to scrutinise. Thus started the road down to the modern entanglement of the Arab masses to colonial masters and hand-picked Western vassals.

Some may argue that the British were helping the Arabs gain autonomy, but history shows this to be an absolute lie. London was furthering its own interests and it had been a geo-strategic objective of theirs to divide the Ottoman Empire up regardless of the fact that that there was a war with the Ottomans and the Central Powers.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement reveals this as does the creation of British and French mandates in the place of what were supposed to be independent Arab nations. It should also be noted that all the major problems in the Middle East are rooted in this period from the Armenian Genocide, the Kurdish Question, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, to the issue of Cyprus and the territorial disputes of the Persian Gulf and the Levant.

The Arab elites are being marshalled into formation yet again to do the dirty work of foreign powers. Once again, Arab leaders are also accessories to the agenda of foreigners in the Middle East against their own people.

### **Links between the UAE speeches of Messrs Bush and Blair: Dividing the Middle East into camps**

The “us and them” mentality is being lodged into the mindset of Middle Easterners in regards to themselves. The ancient region is being divided into two camps by the White House and its partners.

After the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon in July 2006, Condoleezza Rice the US Secretary of State and others such as Tony Blair started this venture by categorised the Middle East into two groupings. Those in the Middle East that fell into the Anglo-American camp and colluded with Israel were described as “moderates” and “reformers” and as part of what became called the “Coalition of the Moderate.” It is also around this time that the Pentagon announced its plans to arm Israel, Mahmud Abbas, and the Arab regimes allied to the US and Britain.

Those in the Middle East who either opposed foreign intervention and hegemony in the region, either because of their own agenda or because of the right for self-determination, were labelled “extremists” and “rejectionists.”<sup>1</sup> These anti-hegemonic forces in the Middle East were categorised as members of the “other camp” even though in some cases they had no links aside from fighting foreign tutelage. This latter camp includes the Iraqi Resistance, Hamas, and Iran, amongst others.

There is an obvious theme in the underlying rhetoric of the December 2006 and January 2008 Middle East policy speeches of Tony Blair and George W. Bush. Both were presented in the UAE and held almost exactly a year apart. Both speeches depict a bloc of radicals in the Middle East led by Iran and both speeches attempt to divide the Middle East into two opposing blocs.

It was soon after the disastrous 2006 Israeli war against Lebanon that Tony Blair, in line

with Condoleezza Rice, subtly called for “an alliance of moderation in the region and outside of it to defeat the extremists.”<sup>2</sup> While in Dubai the former British prime minister called Iran a “strategic challenge,” which according to Paul Reynolds, an international affairs correspondent, was a replacement for the words “strategic threat” from his original speech read in California. He also replaced the words “trying to acquire a nuclear weapon” with “trying to acquire nuclear weapons capability.”<sup>3</sup> This obvious change in word selection was because the people of the countries living next to Iran know better and would not have taken Tony Blair’s speech seriously.

This was simply the beginning of the public revelation of the alliance system that already informally subsisted in the Middle East. Tony Blair’s UAE speech was another stage in the media phase of the war effort that includes the preparation of the general public for confrontation in the Middle East. It was also part of the attempt to turn the conflict into one of ideas and an ideological one like the Cold War.

### **The UAE and Israel as models for the “New Middle East”**

By the start of 2008, the White House and its allies have ceased their insincere chatter about democratisation in the Middle East, except in the case of Iran where it is mentioned ad nauseam. This sidesteps the reality that Iran holds democratic elections and that Iran is a far less inhibited state than any of America’s Arab sponsored regimes. Democracy has never been a goal for the US in the Middle East, especially in regards to its own set of autocratic and dictatorial allies.

The White House is promoting two models on two different levels in the Middle East as a part of its regional project. One is the latent model of Israel as a homogeneous nation. The second model, which is openly promoted, is the Khaliji (Gulf) model or that of the Arab Sheikdoms that form the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) in the Persian Gulf littoral. The Khaliji model applies in particular to the UAE and one of its seven emirates, Dubai, as its embodiment. Israel is the socio-political model for the Middle East, whereas Dubai is the socio-economic model for the Middle East. Both models also bare staggering social ramifications.

The Israeli model, which is being moved forward is not based on any democratic values, quite the opposite. It is predicated on ethnocentrism and discrimination. The Middle East is being reconfigured in Israel’s image as a region with homogeneous states and this is evident in Iraq and a reason for the tensions being fanned by foreign influence in the multi-confessional Lebanese Republic. Just as Israel is considered the “Jewish State” the Project for the “New Middle East” wants to establish a whole series of single-identity states in the ancient region.

The socio-economic model of Dubai and the GCC is based on a vertical mosaic, in the tradition of John A. Porter’s *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada*, where ethnicity, heredity and origins play a role in individual status and its system in itself is a reconstruction of the caste system of India.

Dubai is a place that is rabid with the exploitation of foreign workers and nationals and is

infamous for the institutionalisation of gross inequities and immorality. Local laws are made to only benefit the privileged and powerful, while the poor are suppressed. Money-laundering and prostitution are also far spread in Dubai, and the UAE is a modern Sodom and Gomorrah.

### **Israel, NATO, and the Arab regimes: A nexus against resistance**

The House of Saud and Saudi Arabia have emerged as the main force in configuring a public embracement between Israel and the Arab World under the auspices of the 2002 Arab Initiative.<sup>4</sup> This Saudi-proposed initiative is deeply tied to the Project for a “New Middle East” and allows Israel to integrate its economy with that of the Arab World and allows for the creation of an alliance between Israel and the Arab regimes against any forces in the Middle East resisting America, its allies, and more importantly their political and socio-economic model.

Despite King Abdullah’s speech in Riyadh during the March 2007 Arab League Summit, Saudi Arabia has officially opposed any end to the Anglo-American occupation of Iraq and the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq under the pretext that the Iraqi Shi’ites and the Iranians will kill the Iraqi Sunnis.

A representative of the Saudi monarchy, quoting Prince Turki al-Faisal, informed the US press that, “Since America came into [meaning invaded] Iraq uninvited, it should not leave [end the Anglo-American occupation] uninvited,” and rhetorically added that “If it [the US] does [withdraw its troops from Iraq], one of the first consequences will be a massive Saudi intervention to stop Iranian-backed Shi’a militias from butchering Iraqi Sunnis.”<sup>5</sup>

Israel has always considered the leaders of Jordan as important assets and allies to pacify the Arabs. On 18 April 2007 King Abdullah II of Jordan reconfirmed this publicly known Israeli secret. King Abdullah II told a visiting Israeli delegation that Jordan and Israel were allies, emphasising that he not only spoke for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan but for Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Arab Sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf.<sup>6</sup>

The Jordanian King narrated to Dalia Itzik, Acting Israeli President, Tzachi Hanegbi, the Chairman of the Israeli Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, and other Israeli officials that “we [Arab rulers and Israel] are in the same boat; we have the same problem [the forces of resistance in the region]. We have the same enemies [Syria, Iran, the Palestinians, and Lebanon].”<sup>7</sup>

It is worth noting that the Saudi government and the Arab leaders of Egypt, Jordan, and the Arab Sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf were fully involved, covertly and/or overtly, in the 1991 Gulf War and in the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. These rulers also played major roles in the Iraq-Iran War and the economic warfare against Iraq which prodded Iraq into invading Kuwait for economic relief after its bitter war with Iran.

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan are all firmly in the Anglo-American camp. They are part of the extended international military network controlled by the United States. They are already members of the coalition that has been formed against Iran, Syria, and those forces that have allied themselves with Tehran and Damascus.<sup>8</sup> To varying degrees these Arab states are also allied with Israel and NATO. All of these Arab governments that are labelled as

“pro-Western” or “pro-American” also have bilateral military and security ties and agreements with the United States or Britain and NATO. However, it is not certain that these states will stay by the side of Washington and London.

### **Turning the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf into NATO lakes**

NATO is expanding, but not only in Europe and the former Soviet Union. There have been long-standing plans to turn the Mediterranean into a permanent “NATO lake” and an arena closely linked to the European Union. The Russian naval build-up in the Eastern Mediterranean and off the Syrian coast is a move to challenge this process.

Several Arab regimes have had agreements and military arrangements with NATO through NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue (established in 1995) for over a decade. Amongst them are Egypt and Jordan. These are the Arab nations that border the Mediterranean or are in close proximity to it. While on the other hand, the Arab Sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf have lately entered into arrangements with NATO. For example, Kuwait recently signed security agreements with NATO and effectively opening the door for NATO entrance into the Persian Gulf.

The GCC agreements under way with NATO are effectively an extension of the Mediterranean Dialogue and NATO expansion eastwards. The shift to create a Gulf common market similar to the EU and a Mediterranean Union are also linked to NATO expansion and the project to permanently compel the Washington Consensus on the Middle East and the Arab World

The expansion of a mandate for NATO in the Persian Gulf has been in motion for years and has followed behind NATO’s objectives in the Mediterranean Sea. NATO influence in the Persian Gulf effectively allows the area to fall under the joint management of Franco-German and Anglo-American interests. It is no coincidence that Nicholas Sarkozy started his presidential tour of the Middle East in the same window of time as the US President nor is it a twist of fate that France and the UAE signed an agreement on 15 January 2008 allowing France to establish a permanent military base in UAE territory on the shores of the Persian Gulf.<sup>9</sup>

### **The real divisions in the Middle East: Indigenous forces versus foreign clients**

In Palestine, during past demonstrations in 2006, the press reported that small groups of Fatah supporters chanted “Shi’a, Shi’a, Shi’a,” in mockery of Hamas because of its political links to Tehran, because Iran is a predominantly Shi’a Muslim country.<sup>10</sup> This was a dismal sign of the growing animosity that has been inseminated in the Middle East. Yet, it also reflects that the divisions in the Middle East, such as the Shi’a-Sunni divide, are manufactured and artificially engineered.

Hamas, like Syria, is Sunni Muslim in identity and it is allied with Iran, which is predominantly Shi’a Muslim. This alliance clearly demonstrates that the real divisions in the Middle East are not based on religious or ethnic affinity or differences. Similarly, in Lebanon the forces of resistance are Muslim, Christian, and Druze and not just Hezbollah or Lebanon’s Shi’a Muslims as is often described in the Western media.

In reality, the regional differences in the Middle East are between the independent and indigenous forces, regardless of religion, politics, and/or ethnicity, in the region and the client forces and governments in the region that serve Anglo-American and Franco-German foreign policy and economic interests.

### **The Resistance Bloc**

“As Lord Chatham said, when he was speaking on the British presence in North America, he said, ‘If I was an American, as I am an Englishman, as long as one Englishman remained on American native soil I would never, never, never lay down my arms.’”—General Sir Michael Rose, British Army

To generalise, the independent and indigenous forces of the Middle East are:

(1) most of the various Palestinian fractions. This included the Palestinian Authority under Hamas before the Mecca Accord and the truce that was reached with Mahmud Abbas and Fatah;

(2) the Lebanese Resistance and National Opposition in Lebanon, which is a combination of Muslims, Druze, and Christians;

(3) the Iraqi Resistance, which is a genuine series of diverse peoples’ movements that reflects the will of the Iraqi people(s);

(4) Syria;

(5) Iran, which is both a rival and the centre of the organised political and state-levels of resistance.

### **People-based resistance and state-based resistance**

The forces of resistance in the Middle East and neighbouring Afghanistan can be classified as being either a peoples’ resistance or being a state-level force of resistance. However, there is a third and hybrid category.

Iraq and Afghanistan both purely represent peoples’ resistance movements. Iran and Syria, for whatever rationale (good and bad), represent cases of state-level centres of resistance to the US, NATO, and Israel. Sudan also falls into this category.

The forces of resistance in Palestine and Lebanon fall in between these two categories as a mixture of state-level and people-based resistance. In close proximity to the Middle East in the Horn of Africa, Somalia is a debatable case, but is also an authentic centre of resistance against foreign control that is linked to the struggle to reconfigure the Middle East.

The forces of resistance in Lebanon and Palestine are also distinctive in that they are also locked in internal or domestic struggles between client and co-opted forces serving the Anglo-American, Franco-German, and Israeli agenda in the Middle East.

The involvement of a whole nation’s assets is obviously one of the major differences between the state-level centres of resistance, such as Iran, and the peoples’ movements of resistance that is disenfranchised from governing, such as in Iraq. However, wherever there is a greater amount of foreign military subjugation the forces of resistance are stronger and spring from the support of the local populaces. The heavy casualties that the US, Britain, and

NATO are facing in Iraq and Afghanistan are because of the will of the peoples' and their resistance.

### **Struggles throughout the Middle East: The “Coalition of the Moderate” versus the Resistance Bloc**

The existing divisions between the independent and indigenous forces of the Middle East and those aligned within the Anglo-American orbit are represented by the following:

- (1) the struggle between Hamas and its allies with Israel, Fatah, and their allies in the Palestinian Territories;
- (2) the ongoing struggle between the Iraqi Resistance, which is essentially the Iraqi people, with the US and Coalition forces over the occupation of Iraq;
- (3) the political face-off between the Lebanese National Opposition (the majority in Lebanon) and the Lebanese governing parties (the minority in Lebanon);
- (4) the clash over Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq taking place between Syria and both NATO powers and their Arab clients;
- (5) and finally the many bitter regional and international rows between Iran and the United States, which includes the Iranian nuclear energy programme and Iraq.

### **The Bush tour: War drums, resistance, and the “New Middle East”**

“One cause of instability is the extremists supported and embodied by the regime that sits in Tehran. Iran is today the world’s leading state sponsor of terror. It sends hundreds of millions of dollars to extremists around the world—while its own people face repression and economic hardship at home. It undermines Lebanese hopes for peace by arming and aiding the terrorist group Hezbollah. It subverts the hopes for peace in other parts of the region by funding terrorist groups like Hamas and the Palestine Islamic Jihad. It sends arms to the Taliban in Afghanistan and Shi’a militants in Iraq. It seeks to intimidate its neighbours with ballistic missiles and bellicose rhetoric. And finally, it defies the United Nations and destabilises the region by refusing to be open and transparent about its nuclear programmes and ambitions. Iran’s actions threaten the security of nations everywhere. So the United States is strengthening our long-standing security commitments with our friends in the Gulf—and rallying friends around the world to confront this danger before it is too late.”—George W. Bush, President of the United States (speech in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 13 January 2008)

It is no secret that the main purpose of the US presidential tour of the Middle East was to raise opposition against Iran and anyone resisting the “New Middle East.” Almost immediately, Syria claimed that the presidential Middle Eastern tour of George W. Bush Jr. was mostly made to try and further isolate Syria and orchestrate a future war scenario against Iran.<sup>11</sup>

The US President’s tour of the Middle East came at a time when the US Navy made false claims about threats being made by Iranian Revolutionary Guard speedboats in the Persian Gulf.



After the US Navy withdrew its allegations the US President stated that if any thing negative should happen to US warships in the region it would be Tehran that would be held responsible.

At the same time there was a bombing in Beirut that was directed against the American embassy. The bombing in Beirut could have been staged, just as the US Navy's claims were fictitious, to justify the US President's position against Iran and the Resistance Bloc. In addition, reports were released from Israel about an Iranian-made rocket being fired from the Gaza Strip by the Palestinians during the US President's tour of the Middle East.

In 2007, the Syrian President while in Deir ez-Zor, on the eve of an important conference on Iraq in Sharm al-Sheikh in which Condoleezza Rice publicly initiated contact with the foreign ministers of Syria and Iran, warned his countrymen that "Syria, the Arab region and the Middle East are going through a dangerous period. Destructive colonial projects are seeking to divide and reshape our region creating a new Sykes-Picot [Agreement]." <sup>12</sup>

Abdel al-Bari Atouani, a noted Palestinian figure and the editor-in-chief of the *Al-Qods al-Arabi* in London, warned in a televised interview with ANB television in early February 2007 that the US is exploiting the Arab countries through their governments as the firewood to wage a war against Iran and its allies in the Middle East.

The Jerusalem Post, in sequence with the US President's arrival in Saudi Arabia from the UAE, released statements from an unnamed senior Palestinian official from the West Bank claiming that "Syria and Iran have stepped up their efforts to overthrow Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas and his ruling Fatah party." <sup>13</sup> The claims were compiled by Khaled Abu Toameh and also brought to light the political gathering of a large array of Palestinian political parties (referred to by Abu Toameh as "radical groups") that will be hosted by the Syrians in Damascus.

Not surprisingly, Khaled Abu Toameh's article failed to point out that the Palestinian government running the West Bank is illegitimate and follows the orders of Mahmud Abbas instead of a popularly elected Palestinian prime minister. The Palestinians gathering in Damascus will study ways to make the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) more inclusive and representative of mainstream Palestinian desires instead of the edicts of Mahmud Abbas and a few other individuals that run portions of the West Bank as personal fiefdoms with Israel and the White House as their overlords.

In Lebanon, a newspaper affiliated with the Hariri family and its political allies also started to toe the American-led campaign line to demonise Iran. *Al-Nahar*, the newspaper once edited by the slain Lebanese parliamentarian Gebran Tueni, stated in an opinion piece by Ali Hamade that the Arab League must pressure Tehran for a settlement in Lebanon and it is in Iran that the path lies to a Lebanese settlement or towards confrontation "if developments [in the Middle East] headed towards a confrontation with the Iranian imperial agenda for the Arab East."

## **The Oval Office, the establishment, and Anglo-American foreign policy in the Middle East**

US and British foreign policies are more about the objectives of the Anglo-American establishment than the distinctiveness of the individuals that hold the office of American president and British prime minister. This reality has been confirmed in the course of the election campaign by the potential successors of George W. Bush Jr., Democrats and Republicans alike.

Aside from a few individuals who represent the true aspirations of the American people, the majority of presidential contenders in the US are talking about a virtual continuation of the military policies of the Bush Jr. Administration.

John McCain has talked about attacking Lebanon and Syria.<sup>14</sup>

Hilary Clinton wants a permanent occupation of Iraq or a “post-occupation phase” as US officials decadently call it and she has threatened Iran.

Rudy Giuliani, the former mayor of New York, has made it clear he intends to mirror the Bush Jr. Administration and that he does not intend to recognise a Palestinian state and that he would use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear Iran.

The era of wars will not be over with the departure of George W. Bush Jr. and Vice-President Cheney from the White House.

The problem is deeper and more complicated than the persona of one man and his cabinet. George W. Bush Jr. is only a figurehead in the mechanisms of a larger machine; he represents the establishment but he alone or his cabinet do not steer the helm of US foreign policy.

### **Important questions: The nature of co-operation and rivalry between America, Iran, and Syria**

Our reality is a far more complicated one. Once upon a time, before coming to power, Hamas used to collaborate with Israel against Yasser Arafat’s Fatah.

The *Christian Science Monitor* made a good point in an article by Marc Lynch: “Everywhere you turn, it is the policy of Iran to foment instability and chaos,’ Defence Secretary Robert Gates warned Gulf dignitaries in Bahrain last month [December 2007]. But in reality, everywhere you turn, from Qatar to Saudi Arabia to Egypt, you now see Iranian leaders shattering long-standing taboos by meeting cordially with their Arab counterparts.”<sup>15</sup>

In fact the Iranian President, Mahmud Ahmadi Nejad, was invited to the important GCC Summit in the Qatari capital, Doha, which discussed the economic integration of the Persian Gulf and GCC-Iranian co-operation. Iran, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia also were making public shows of drawing closer even before the gathering in Doha, which included military and economic agreements between Oman and Iran.

Cairo and Tehran have also publicly opened the door for the full normalisation of diplomatic relations. What develops in Egyptian-Iranian relations is yet to be seen. Iran is also making further economic and commercial inroads into both Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran and Syria are also linking their energy infrastructure with Iraq and also taking steps that undeniable assist the US in Anglo-American occupied Iraq.

The nomination of General Michel Sulaiman as the next Lebanese president has also been called a concession to Syria for its co-operation with the US in Iraq and even for its

attendance at the Annapolis Summit.

However, if this is so then there are unanswered questions not only about Syrian-American co-operation, but about the meeting between David Welch, the US Under-Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, and General Sulaiman before the fighting between Fatal Al-Islam and the Lebanese Army erupted in 2007.

It is clear that there is an agenda to redraw the borders of the Middle East in order to institute lasting economic policies that benefit Anglo-American and Franco-German interests, along with their Israeli bulldog in the Middle East.

The Syrians and the Iranians are well aware of the plans to divide their home region and to play the peoples of the Middle East against one another. Tehran and Damascus too have been guilty of playing the same game for their own interests, but what America and its allies envisage is a far broader partition and reconfiguration of the Middle East, which also places Syria and Iran in the sights of this historic struggle.

The question here is: are these efforts to divide the Middle East (into “moderates” and “radicals”) part of a policy of containment, a war strategy, or something far more sinister?

The intentions of people-based resistance movements like those of the Iraqi Resistance are simple and mostly clear, but state-based resistance—if it can really be called that—is often ambivalent in its intent.

Are Iran and Syria genuinely resisting the “New Middle East” which in the end serves the Washington Consensus? The ongoing economic reforms including the privatisation programmes in both Iran and Syria suggest that these countries are not totally opposed to the dominant neo-liberal agenda, which characterises Washington’s expansionary policies.<sup>16</sup>

It is no sin to question motives, especially when circumstances call for it, but it is a sin and a crime to mislead the masses. As developments in the Middle East unfold, the political stance of Iran and Syria will become clearer.

## Notes

1. Jonathan Beale, “Rice seeks Mid-East support on Iraq,” British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 13 January 2007.
2. Paul Reynolds, “Blair and the ‘strategic challenge’ of Iran,” British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 20 December 2007.
3. Ibid.
4. Uzi Mahnaimi, “Saudis lead Israel peace bid,” *Times* (London), 3 December 2006.
5. Simon Tisdall, “Iran v. Saudis in battle of Beirut,” *Guardian* (London), 5 December 2006.
6. Shahar Ilan, “Jordan’s Abdullah tells Israel: We share same enemies,” *Ha’aretz*, 19 April 2007. The remarks were immediately denied by the Jordanian king once they were circulated by the Israeli press. These denials are parallel to the denials of the house of Saud about its diplomatic meetings and negotiations between Saudi Arabia and Israel which were divulged as true after the initial denials.
7. Ibid.
8. Anatole Kaletsky, “An unholy alliance threatening catastrophe,” *Times* (London), 4

January 2007.

9. Laurent Pirot, "France signs UAE military base agreement," Associated Press, 12 January 2008; Emmanuel Jarry, "France, UAE sign military, nuclear agreement," Reuters, 15 January 2008; Paul Reynolds, "French make serious move into Gulf," British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 15 January 2008.
10. "Fatah, Hamas clash in Gaza after Abbas calls early elections," Associated Press, 16 December 2006.
11. "Damascus slams Arab leaders for allowing Bush's 'criticism of Syria,'" Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA), 14 January 2008.
12. Mazen and Thawra, "President al-Assad says Arab region passes through new juncture," Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA), 30 April 2007.
13. Khaled Abu Toameh, "Syria, Iran trying to overthrow Abbas," *Jerusalem Post*, 15 January 2008.
14. Shani Rosenfelder, "McCain: Disarm Hizbullah, tackle Assad," *Jerusalem Post*, 9 August 2007.
15. Marc Lynch, "Why US strategy on Iran is crumbling: Gulf states no longer want to isolate Iran," *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 January 2008.
16. Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, "The Sino-Russian alliance: Challenging America's ambitions in Eurasia," Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), 26 August 2007; Julian Barnes-Dacey, "Even with sanctions, Syrians embrace KFC and GAP," *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 January 2008.

■ Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya is an independent writer based in Ottawa specialising in Middle Eastern affairs. He is a research associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG).