

**Lessons from the War:
A Call for Strategic Reckoning in West Asia**

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In its recent statement, the GCC declared that “Iranian attacks have also led to a sharp loss of confidence by the Council states in Iran, which requires Iran to take the initiative to make serious efforts to rebuild trust.” While rebuilding trust in our region is a lofty and essential objective, and while Iran has always taken the initiative in this regard, it is imperative for all sides to recognize their share in the current regrettable state of affairs.

The unprovoked aggression against Iran was the product of blatant miscalculations and mistakes. It was predicated on the illusion that Iran had been weakened and thus incapable of resisting and responding forcefully to a massive onslaught by two nuclear powers, aided and abated by regional actors. Policymakers in Washington and Tel Aviv and in some regional capitals convinced themselves that a swift campaign of economic pressure, sabotage, covert operation, decapitation, and indiscriminate war crimes could break the Islamic Republic and leave it with little opportunity to respond. They were wrong. Iran’s response, measured yet resolute, demonstrated not only its military resilience but also its capacity to react on a scale that reverberated far beyond the region.

Our Arab neighbors in the Council had their grave share in these miscalculations and Iran may have played a role in misleading them. For five decades, they consistently stood on the wrong side of history – supporting Saddam Hussain’s aggression and even assisting Israel to intercept Iranian missiles launched in self-defense following Israel’s murder of an Arab leader in Iran. Some of them actively encouraged the United States to take military action against Iran, even asking the latter to add Iranian naval forces to its list of targets. In return, they allowed the United States to use U.S. bases within their territories to launch and logistically support many of its acts of aggression and war crimes against Iran. They even publicly sided with the United States as it committed war crimes against Iran, reminding Iranians of the sad days these Muslim brothers and sisters sided with Saddam Hussain as he used chemical weapons against Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish civilians. Extensive human and financial damages were inflicted upon the people of Iran through these illegal attacks, which were deliberately launched and sustained from sovereign territories of our Arab neighbors. Even as it became unmistakably clear that the United States was preparing to commit systematic war crimes against Iran’s civilian population — including strikes on populated areas and critical infrastructure — they indeed proved unwilling to prohibit or even restrict the use of their land, airspace, and military facilities for such war crimes against their Muslim brothers and sisters in Iran.

Some of our Arab neighbors in the Council mistakenly hoped that Iran would either be incapacitated and unable to respond or would continue to turn a blind eye to their complicity in an aggression that

explicitly targeted its territorial integrity and even its very existence. That illusion proved tragically wishful, and Iran had no other choice but to reluctantly respond – still in a calibrated and restrained fashion – to the attacks launched or logistically supported from the territories of Council states.

To move forward, it is therefore imperative for our neighbors to disabuse themselves of such distorted perceptions of the past and their misplaced proclamations of victimhood. A transitional moment now confronts our region. The conflict has exposed the fragility of imported security architectures and the enduring strength of indigenous power and regional security networking. Rather than doubling down on yesterday's alliances, our brothers and sisters in the region will be well-advised to pause and reassess. The right lessons from this episode point toward a future grounded in self-reliance, regional agency and an inclusive security network.

First, Iran and its Arab neighbors are here to stay. Iran has weathered sanctions, foreign sponsored terrorism,, hybrid warfare and even decapitation for nearly five decades. Its population, though diverse, has repeatedly shown it will rally around the flag when faced with foreign intervention. Tehran possesses the means to counter existential threats, and its geography grants it leverage that can impose devastating consequences on global markets if pushed too far. Iran's exercise of restraint for far too long created the misimpression that the Strait of Hormuz could be open to all while Iran was essentially deprived of it due to illegal and immoral US sanction

– from which our neighbors immensely benefitted, building their fortunes on the unlawful miseries imposed on their Iranian brethren.

More importantly, Iran’s power is not imported or artificial; it is home-grown, rooted in unchangeable variables: a millennial history of an enduring and continuous civilization-state, a rich and cohesive culture, a youthful and educated population, and an instinct for survival sharpened by centuries of resisting external domination. No amount of foreign pressure can alter these foundations. Those neighbors who continue to bet against this reality can only blame themselves for ignoring geography, history, and demography.

Second, the “security-and-development model” pursued by several Arab states has proven deeply flawed. For years, the formula was simple: purchase security by spending lavishly on procuring the most sophisticated U.S. weapons systems and hosting U.S. military bases – and even Israeli intelligence and terrorism centers – and invite foreign investment under the umbrella of that imported security. The model delivered neither genuine security nor the perception of stability required for sustainable economic growth.

The perception that some Arab capitals sided with the United States and Israel against a fellow Muslim country earned them infamy across the Islamic world. That reputational damage was later compounded by the U.S. president’s crude and condescending rhetoric directed at them. Now, reports that Washington is contemplating forcing our neighbors to foot the bill for a war launched at their expense and on Israel’s behalf only confirm the cynicism at the heart of the arrangement. The greatest mistake would be to double

down on this failed model once the guns fall silent. Continuing to tie national security and economic futures to external patrons who use their bases as staging ground for aggression against neighbors and treat them as obedient clients is a recipe for perpetual dependence and recurring humiliation.

Third, the war has produced political and legal realities that our neighbors need to recognize. The presence of American bases – from which aggression to “annihilate Iranian civilization” was launched and logistically supported – cannot be considered as innocent and neutral security partnership, but as an existential threat to Iran – as it has been proven over the course of past two wars and even in previous hostilities against Iran. These bases have been erected here not to protect their hosts, but to harm Iran even at the expense of their hosts. Arab states that continue to host such installations are actively participating in the militarization of the region, including the Strait of Hormuz, a chokepoint vital to their own economies.

Fourth, Israel’s deepening presence in the region has only brought conflict and will bring nothing but insecurity and the erosion of state independence. Israel does not merely occupy land; it penetrates political systems through sophisticated networks of lobbies and pressure groups. It hollows out sovereignty from within, turning national decision-making into an extension of its own interests. To understand the pattern, one need only examine how AIPAC has captured key levers of power in Washington, or how similar organisations have replicated the model across European capitals. Just pay attention to the disgust in the United States about how Israel

– which has never taken one single step to help its American benefactors – has imposed its whims at the expense of American blood and treasure. Arab states that have rushed to normalize ties with Tel Aviv – or want to replicate its behavior – have traded long-term autonomy for short-term optics. The people of our region deserve better than to watch their governments’ foreign policies increasingly dictated from afar. A regime that is actively blackmailing its patron including though the Epstein files, cannot be expected to treat any better those who want to outsource their security to its defunct iron dome.

Fifth, and most constructively, Iran’s past initiatives – such as the Hormuz Peace Endeavour (HOPE), the Muslim West Asian Dialogue Association (MWADA) or the Middle East Network for Atomic Research and Advancement (MENARA) – have demonstrated a genuine desire to reach out to neighbors in order to establish inclusive regional cooperation networks. Ignoring or even dismissing these overtures under the illusion that Washington would provide ironclad security has been a historic error. The path forward lies in revising past mistakes and embracing a genuinely local security networking regime rooted in shared interests.

West Asia is blessed with immense wealth, energy resources, ancient cultures, a common religion, and centuries of intertwined histories. These assets should be capitalised upon to forge a new regional network capable of addressing common challenges – from water scarcity and climate change to economic diversification and technological advancement – without external tutelage. A security

network architecture built by the region, and for the region, is no longer a utopian slogan, it is a strategic necessity.

The war has ended the era of comfortable illusions. It is evident that security cannot be purchased or outsourced. Nor can security be attained at the expense of the insecurity and threats against Iran. With this war, realities cannot be ignored, nor can Iran's grievances be swept under the rug. Foreigners are only here to take advantage and will leave as soon as the costs outweigh the benefits. But we are destined to live together until the Day of Judgment. Iran has shown it cannot be subdued by the war machines of the biggest evil powers, but is eager to live in peace with its Muslim brother and sisters in the region. The real question is whether the rest of West Asia will have the wisdom to adapt to that enduring truth. Let us all seize this moment to build a future defined by respect, dignity, and mutual security and prosperity.