

Will the Gulf adopt Sadat's strategic framework?

written by Prof. Zaki Shalom | 02.03.2026

Former Egyptian president Anwar Sadat experienced a profound strategic reappraisal in 1977. Four years after the Yom Kippur War, he concluded that Egypt would not succeed in defeating Israel through military means.

The 1973 Yom Kippur War had been initiated under conditions that were, at least initially, highly advantageous to Egypt. Nevertheless, despite early tactical gains, Egypt failed to achieve its strategic objective of subduing Israel.

Simultaneously, Sadat observed the gradual erosion of expectations that diplomatic pressure exerted by the United States would compel Israel to restore the Sinai Peninsula to Egyptian sovereignty.

The Rogers Plan, led by the US, to end aggression following the 1967 Six Day War had been launched with considerable optimism, but ultimately dissipated.

At the time, the United States was led by president Jimmy Carter, a progressive statesman animated by a pronounced moral-religious vision. Like many policymakers, Carter was deeply invested in the "Palestinian paradigm." He committed substantial political capital to advancing a comprehensive resolution of the Palestinian question.

Under these circumstances, Sadat realized that from this particular administration he would not secure Egypt's foremost national objective: the full restoration of Egyptian sovereignty over Sinai.

Peace between Israel and Egypt still holding

Confronted with these realities, Sadat adopted a revolutionary strategic course - negotiating peace directly with Israel. Eventually, an Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty was concluded. It still endures, notwithstanding formidable regional upheavals and recurrent bilateral tensions.

It is conceivable that a variant of the "Sadat model" may reemerge in the aftermath of the current confrontation with Iran. The Gulf states - Saudi Arabia,

Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates - may ultimately conclude that the United States cannot serve indefinitely as their primary strategic guarantor.

Recent developments have underscored the conditional nature of American engagement in the region. President Donald Trump sought to justify US involvement in the confrontation with Iran by repeatedly emphasizing that Iran constitutes a direct strategic threat to the United States itself.

The message to the American public was explicit: American military action was undertaken not on behalf of regional allies, but in defense of core American national interests.

These statements generated significant domestic criticism. Prominent media commentator Tucker Carlson cautioned that war with Iran would damage US national interests. Senator Rand Paul argued that American military intervention might paradoxically consolidate the Iranian regime rather than weaken it. Congressman Thomas Massie maintained that no immediate threat to the United States existed and emphasized that the constitutional authority to declare war resides with Congress.

Representative Ro Khanna similarly asserted that such a conflict was “not our war” and insisted upon prior congressional authorization.

Public opinion surveys indicate that considerable segments of the American public remain skeptical regarding sustained military engagement against Iran. For the time being, criticism of presidential policy has remained relatively restrained, largely because significant American casualties have not materialized and because there persists an assumption that the campaign will be limited in scope and duration.

In the aftermath of the conflict, however, the Gulf states may be compelled to undertake a comprehensive reassessment of their long-term security architecture. During the confrontation, they have witnessed Iran’s willingness to cross established red lines and to target civilian infrastructure unrelated to any direct American military presence. They are likely to question whether a politically polarized and increasingly isolationist United States can continue to function as a dependable strategic anchor over time.

The potential conclusion of such a reassessment appears straightforward. Economic modernization, architectural grandeur, and ambitious development projects will not, in themselves, ensure national security. The Gulf states will need to invest substantially in strengthening their independent defense capabilities. Equally important, they will need to cultivate robust strategic partnerships with regional powers that can serve as reliable anchors during periods of crisis. In such a framework, Israel would almost certainly assume a central and stabilizing role.

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