

# THE NEOCONS' LONG ANIMOSITY TOWARDS MOHAMED EL BARADEI

As Siun noted yesterday, Mohamed el Baradei issued a statement critical of US support for Hosni Mubarak in advance of returning to Egypt (and, as of now, being put under house arrest).

Of course, you in the West have been sold the idea that the only options in the Arab world are between authoritarian regimes and Islamic jihadists. That's obviously bogus. If we are talking about Egypt, there is a whole rainbow variety of people who are secular, liberal, market-oriented, and if you give them a chance they will organize themselves to elect a government that is modern and moderate. They want desperately to catch up with the rest of the world.

It's not at all clear that Baradei will serve as the kind of leader in Egypt that he seems to want to. But given that Baradei is one of the few opposition leaders the US press seems to understand, I think it worthwhile to review the Neocons long-standing attacks on him.

Though the US first supported Baradei's election to head the IAEA, US support for him soured when, in 2003, he called bullshit on the US propaganda meant to justify our invasion of Iraq, most notably when he declared the Niger case to have been based on amateurishly forged documents.

Based on available evidence, the IAEA team has concluded that Iraq's efforts to import these aluminium tubes were not likely to have been related to the manufacture of centrifuges and, moreover, that it was highly unlikely that Iraq could have achieved the considerable re-design needed to use

them in a revived centrifuge programme.

[snip]

The IAEA has made progress in its investigation into reports that Iraq sought to buy uranium from Niger in recent years. The investigation was centred on documents provided by a number of States that pointed to an agreement between Niger and Iraq for the sale of uranium between 1999 and 2001. The IAEA has discussed these reports with the Governments of Iraq and Niger, both of which have denied that any such activity took place. For its part, Iraq has provided the IAEA with a comprehensive explanation of its relations with Niger, and has described a visit by an Iraqi official to a number of African countries, including Niger, in February 1999, which Iraq thought might have given rise to the reports. The IAEA was also able to review correspondence coming from various bodies of the Government of Niger, and to compare the form, format, contents and signatures of that correspondence with those of the alleged procurement-related documentation.

Based on thorough analysis, the IAEA has concluded, with the concurrence of outside experts, that these documents – which formed the basis for the reports of recent uranium transactions between Iraq and Niger – are in fact not authentic. We have therefore concluded that these specific allegations are unfounded. [my emphasis]

Baradei followed that up by refusing to make the sweeping condemnations of Iran's nuclear enrichment programs the US wanted him to.

As a result, in the months leading up to the election for his third term, the US tried

everything it could to prevent Baradei's reelection as head of IAEA. As part of that effort, the US scrutinized their wiretaps of Baradei in an unsuccessful attempt to try to find material they could use to claim bias on his part.

The Bush administration has dozens of intercepts of Mohamed ElBaradei's phone calls with Iranian diplomats and is scrutinizing them in search of ammunition to oust him as director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, according to three U.S. government officials.

[snip]

The intercepted calls have not produced any evidence of nefarious conduct by ElBaradei, according to three officials who have read them. But some within the administration believe they show ElBaradei lacks impartiality because he tried to help Iran navigate a diplomatic crisis over its nuclear programs. Others argue the transcripts demonstrate nothing more than standard telephone diplomacy.

Shortly after his reelection, the Nobel committee awarded Baradei the peace prize.

And the NeoCon campaign against Baradei hasn't let up. On several occasions in 2007, John Bolton publicly accused Baradei of coddling Iran.

BOLTON: Mohamed ElBaradei is an apologist for Iran. He has taken positions in flat violation of three Security Council resolutions, and he needs to learn that he works for the member governments of his agency, not the other way around.

BLITZER: But he got a second term. They voted. Despite the Bush administration's

opposition, he was reelected to a second term.

BOLTON: He got a third term, actually, which is even worse.

BLITZER: Third, and so there – he does have the confidence of some people.

BOLTON: I don't think we were effective in our campaign to oppose him. I don't think that he did nearly what we should have done, and I think we are paying the price now and will pay it into the future.

BLITZER: But, you know, in fairness to Mohamed ElBaradei, before the war in Iraq, when Condoleezza Rice and the president were speaking about mushroom clouds of Saddam Hussein and a revived nuclear weapons program that he may be undertaking, he was saying there was absolutely no such evidence. He was poo-pooing it, saying the Bush administration was overly alarming and there was no nuclear weapons program that Hussein had revived. He was right on that one.

BOLTON: Even a stopclock is right twice a day.

[snip]

BLITZER: So you don't believe, obviously, this guy, anything he's basically saying?

BOLTON: I think he's actually undermining the credibility of the IAEA by his overly politicized role in the Iran crisis.

Now, as I said, Baradei may end up being a minor figure among opposition leaders for Egyptians. But as NeoCons weigh in on the possibility of democracy in Egypt, it's worth remembering anti-democratic campaign NeoCons have sustained

against the best known Egyptian opposition  
leader to Americans.