

**ARAB NATIONS, DESPITE ONGOING CIVIL WAR, TERRORISM, &
POLITICAL INSTABILITY, CONTINUE CURSING ISRAEL & U.S.**

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Isranet Daily Briefing, January 29, 2018

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[Trump in the Middle East: Note Who Curses America, and Who Blesses It:](#) Yoram Hazony, *National Review*, Jan. 23, 2018— President Donald Trump has promised that in the Middle East under his presidency, “there are many things that can happen now that would never have happened before.”

[Why Arabs and Muslims Will Not Accept Israel as the Jewish State:](#) Mordechai Kedar, *Algemeiner*, Jan. 19, 2018— Unsurprisingly, Donald Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital aroused massive outrage in the Arab and Islamic world.

[Iranian Protests Reveal Leadership Fault Lines in the Muslim World:](#) Dr. James M. Dorsey, *BESA*, Jan. 16, 2018— The responses by major Sunni Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa to the recent anti-government protests in Iran demonstrated that none of the contenders for regional dominance and leadership, which include Turkey and Egypt, were willing to follow the Saudi lead.

[Quest for Arab Democracy:](#) David Pryce-Jones, *National Review*, Dec. 31, 2017— One day in December 2010, a policewoman in a small and rather humdrum town in Tunisia slapped the face of Mohamed Bouazizi.

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[US Allies Should Back President Trump:](#) Prof. Hillel Frisch, *BESA*, Jan. 28, 2018

[Trump’s Mideast Plan: Take it or Leave it:](#) Alex Fishman, *Ynet*, Jan. 24, 2018

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TRUMP IN THE MIDDLE EAST: _____

NOTE WHO CURSES AMERICA, AND WHO BLESSES IT

Yoram Hazony

[National Review](#), Jan. 23, 2018

President Donald Trump has promised that in the Middle East under his presidency, “there are many things that can happen now that would never have happened before.” Two speeches of the last ten days offer dramatic confirmation of the emerging reconfiguration of America’s relationship with Israel and the Middle East under his leadership.

In a two-hour speech before the Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) last week, Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, denounced the British, Dutch, French, and Americans for having conspired, ever since the 1650s, to create a Jewish colonial outpost that would “erase the Palestinians from Palestine.” As Abbas tells it, all this reached a climax on the eve of World War I, when the West realized that it was on the verge of collapse and that the Islamic world was “poised to inherit European civilization.” To put an end to this threat, the Western nations went about carving up the Muslim world so that it would be forever “divided, backward, and engulfed in infighting.” As for the United States, it has been “playing games” of this sort ever since then, importing, for example, the disastrous Arab Spring into Middle East.

Abbas summed up by demanding an apology and reparations from Britain for the Balfour Declaration and denying that the United States can serve as a mediator in the Mideast. Finally, he went to the trouble of cursing both President Trump and the U.S. Congress: *Yehrab beita* (“May your house be razed”), he said. I have been following the speeches of the PLO and its supporters in the Arab world for 30 years. Nothing here is new. These are the same things that Yasser Arafat, Abbas, and the mainline PLO leadership have always believed. It is a worldview that reflects an abiding hatred for the West, blaming Christians and Jews not only for

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~~the founding of Israel but for every calamity that has befallen the Muslim and Arab world for centuries.~~

What should be one's policy toward an organization committed to such an ideology? One option is to sympathize with the shame and outrage to which the PLO gives voice, and to try to mitigate it with grants of territory, authority, prestige, and large-scale ongoing funding. American administrations have pursued this option, seeking to make a peace partner out of the PLO, since President Ronald Reagan announced a dialogue with it in December 1988. Israel, too, has pursued this option, since 1993. But in the ensuing 30 years of talk, the only major agreements signed have been those the PLO leadership could find a way to fit into its narrative: Agreements such as the 1993 Oslo Accords, which could be portrayed as inflicting a bitter defeat on Israel and the West — and as a step on the road to ultimate triumph.

President Trump, Vice President Pence, and United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley are pioneering an alternative policy, which can be summed up in Haley's words: "We're not going to pay to be abused." If players like the PLO, North Korea, Pakistan, and Iran (hopefully, Turkey gets added to this list soon) want to cultivate a civilizational hatred of America, double-talking while they give aid to global terrorism and conjure diplomatic scandals at the U.N. — well, then they don't get to be allies.

What this looks like was already on display when Trump became the first serving U.S. president to visit the kotel (the Western Wall) in Jerusalem in May, shredding the longstanding diplomatic taboo against making it look as though the holiest site in Judaism is in fact part of the State of Israel. Since then, Trump and Haley have taken on UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, which regularly disseminate the PLO's view of history and current affairs. The Trump administration has cut in half America's massive financial support of UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), an organization whose purpose is to maintain generations of unabsorbed

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descendants of Palestinian Arab refugees, inculcating them in Abbas-style grievances against Israel and the West.

Mike Pence's address on Monday to Israel's parliament, the Knesset, continued this trajectory. But he also responded to Abbas's history lesson with some tasteful but potent narrative-weaving of his own. In addition to the traditional script pointing to the shared interests of the United States and Israel as democracies, Pence emphasized that it was significant to him as an American that "our founders turned to the Hebrew Bible for direction" in establishing their country and that Israel's story "inspired my forebears to create . . . a new birth of freedom." He returned repeatedly to the way in which the story of the Jewish people holding fast to God's promise to return them to their land "shows the power of faith." Pence even said the traditional Jewish *shehehianu* blessing (in Hebrew!), thanking God for bringing us to see this day in which the Jewish people have been restored to their land...

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WHY ARABS AND MUSLIMS WILL NOT

ACCEPT ISRAEL AS THE JEWISH STATE

Mordechai Kedar

[Algemeiner](#), Jan. 19, 2018

Unsurprisingly, Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital aroused massive outrage in the Arab and Islamic world. This was for two main

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reasons — ~~one religious and one nationalist. The religious reason is rooted in~~ Islam's conception of itself as a faith whose mission is to bring both Judaism and Christianity to an end, and inherit all that was once Jewish or Christian: land, places of worship, and people. In Islam's worldview, Palestine in its entirety belongs to Muslims alone, because both Jews and Christians betrayed Allah when they refused to become followers of the prophet Muhammad. Their punishment is ... expulsion from their lands and the forfeiture of all rights to them.

Throughout the history of Islam, Muslims turned churches into mosques, including the Great Mosque of Ramle, the Bani Omayya Mosque in Damascus, the Hagia Sofia of Istanbul, and many Spanish churches. The reason is their belief that Christianity, like Judaism, is nullified by Islam, making churches unnecessary. According to Islamic tenets, the prophets revered by these obsolete religions are Muslims. These include Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Aaron. And according to Islam, King Solomon built a mosque, not a Temple, in Jerusalem. (The 1,500-year gap between the king's reign and the birth of Islam is irrelevant to true believers.)

Jews and Christians can be protected under Muslim rule by becoming subservient to Islam in what is known as *dhimmi* status, which means that they are legally deprived of many rights, including the right to own land and bear arms. *Dhimmis* are forced to pay a head tax (*jyzia*) and are to be kept in a downtrodden state, as is mandated by the Koran. In Islam's view, Jews are not a nation but a collection of religious communities to be found in various countries: a Jew in Poland is a "Pole of the Mosaic religion" and a Jew in Morocco is a "Moroccan Arab of the Mosaic religion."

Suddenly, towards the end of the 19th century, everything changed. Jews began coming to Palestine in ever-growing numbers. The Zionists "invented" a new nation — the "Jewish people" — and decided that a certain part of the House of Islam was their homeland, known as Eretz Israel. They built communities and a protective fighting force even though, as *dhimmis*, they were not supposed to be allowed to bear arms and were subjected to Islam's protection. In 1948, the Jews

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~~actually declared a state, despite the fact that they did not deserve sovereignty.~~—
Then, in 1967, they “conquered” the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Jews now attempt to pray on the Temple Mount, suggesting that Judaism has returned to being an active, living and even dynamic religion. This brings the very *raison d’être* of Islam into question. After all, Islam came into the world in order to make Judaism obsolete. Muslims loyal to their religion and aware of this danger cannot possibly accept the existence of a Jewish state, not even a tiny one on the Tel Aviv coast. To them, Israel as the state of the Jewish people is a theological threat to Islam and only secondarily, a national, political, judicial or territorial threat.

President Trump’s acknowledgement of Israel’s existence by recognizing Jerusalem as its capital was a double whammy for Islam: Trump, a Christian, had granted recognition to the Jews. The outraged Muslim world thought this must be a Christo-Judaic plot against Islam. Trump’s declaration reminded them (along with several Jews) of the November 1917 Balfour Declaration, about which the Arabs continue to rail at the world: “You made the promises of non-owners to those who did not have the right to be given those promises.”

In the weeks following Trump’s declaration, Muslims all over the world expressed their fury at the seal of approval granted the Jewish state — despite its very existence being opposed to that of Islam. Leaders and ordinary citizens, men and women, took to the streets to demonstrate their inability to live with the fact that the most prominent Christian head of state had recognized the capital chosen by the Jewish nation, and, by extension, its right to its own land.

The disturbances in Wadi Ara, in central Israel — rioters attempted to block the main road and damaged a public bus — were another manifestation of Muslim fury. The location is not surprising, because the Wadi Ara area includes the city of Umm al-Fahm, where the main concentration of the Northern Branch of the Islamic

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Movement, headed by the infamous Raed Salah, is to be found. The Northern Branch has been declared illegal, along with some of the smaller organizations it has fostered, resulting in its members having no lawful way to express their fury at the existence of the state of Israel. With little alternative, they act in the public space as individuals without an organizational identity...

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IRANIAN PROTESTS REVEAL LEADERSHIP

FAULT LINES IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Dr. James M. Dorsey

[BESA](#), Jan. 16, 2018

The responses by major Sunni Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa to the recent anti-government protests in Iran demonstrated that none of the contenders for regional dominance and leadership, which include Turkey and Egypt, were willing to follow the Saudi lead. In fact, the responses appeared to confirm that regional leadership was more likely to be shared among Turkey, Egypt, and Iran than decided in the debilitating power struggle between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic, a struggle that has wreaked havoc across the region and which the Kingdom is losing.

Uncharacteristically, Saudi Arabia under the rule of King Salman and his son, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, has refrained from commenting on the

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protests. The kingdom has also been silent in the wake-up to US President Donald J. Trump's decision on what to do about American adherence to the 2015 international nuclear agreement with Iran.

While Saudi media, oblivious to the potential for dissent in the kingdom, gloated about the exploding discontent in Iran, Saudi leaders stayed quiet in a bid to avoid providing Iranian leaders with a pretext to blame external forces for the unrest. (That did not stop Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other Iranian leaders from laying the blame at the doors of Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the US).

Similarly, Saudi Arabia, whose regional prominence is to a significant extent dependent on American, if not international, containment of Iran, stayed on the sidelines as Trump deliberated undermining the agreement that for almost three years has severely restricted Iran's nuclear program and halted the Islamic Republic's ambition of becoming a nuclear power any time soon. While the Saudis would welcome any tightening of the screws on Iran, they have come to see the agreement as not only preventing Iran (at least for now) from developing a military nuclear capability but also as avoiding a regional nuclear arms race in which Turkey and Egypt as well as, potentially, the United Arab Emirates would take part.

The agreement gives the kingdom an opportunity to set up building blocks for a future military nuclear capability, if deemed necessary. Trump's apparent willingness to ease restrictions on Saudi enrichment of uranium as part of his bid to ensure that US companies play a key role in the development of Saudi Arabia's nuclear energy sector facilitates the Saudi strategy. In contrast to the Saudis, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was vocal in his support for the Iranian government and called Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to express his solidarity. Egypt, like Saudi Arabia, has not commented on the protests but has studiously avoided being sucked into the Saudi-Iranian rivalry, including its multiple proxy battles in Yemen and elsewhere.

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The various responses to the Iranian protests reveal more than simply differences of evaluation of those events. They show the fault lines of two, if not three, major alliances that are emerging among the contenders for regional leadership in the Middle East and North Africa and adjacent regions like the Horn of Africa. They also highlight Saudi Arabia's inability to garner overwhelming support for its ambitions and/or efforts to achieve them. Those efforts include the kingdom's declaration of an economic and diplomatic boycott of Qatar; its military intervention in Yemen; and its failed attempt to force the resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri.

Turkey has effectively sought to counter Saudi moves not only by forging close ties to the Islamic Republic despite their differences over Syria, but also by supporting Qatar with a military base in the Gulf state. It has also kept up a supply of food and other goods into Qatar, the flow of which had been interrupted by the Saudi-led boycott. Turkey has established a military training facility in Somalia and is discussing creating a base in Djibouti, the Horn of Africa's rent-a-military base country par excellence (it contains foreign military facilities operated by France, the US, Saudi Arabia, China, and Japan). Turkey also recently signed a \$650 million agreement with Sudan to rebuild a decaying Ottoman port city and construct a naval dock to maintain civilian and military vessels on the African country's Red Sea coast. Saudi Arabia sees the Turkish moves as an effort to encircle it.

Turkey, to the chagrin of Saudi Arabia and its closest regional ally, the UAE, as well as Egypt, has supported the Muslim Brotherhood as well as other strands of political Islam. Egypt recently launched an investigation into embarrassing leaks from alleged intelligence officers that were broadcast on the Brotherhood's Istanbul-based Mekameleen TV station and published in The New York Times. Egypt has denied the accuracy of the leaks. If Saudi Arabia, backed by the UAE, Bahrain, and Israel (as an unacknowledged partner) constitutes one bloc, Turkey forms another that could include the region's third pole, Iran. Egypt, conscious of its past as the Arab world's undisputed leader, may not yet be able to carve out a distinct leadership role for itself, but it is working hard to keep the door open.

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Underlying the jockeying for regional dominance is a stark reality. Turkey, Iran, and Egypt have, to varying degrees, crucial assets that Saudi Arabia lacks: large populations, huge domestic markets, battle-hardened militaries, resources, and a deep sense of identity rooted in an imperial past and/or a sense of thousands of years of history. Saudi Arabia has its status as custodian of Islam's most holy cities and financial muscle. In the long run, those are unlikely to prove sufficient.

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QUEST FOR ARAB DEMOCRACY

David Pryce-Jones

[National Review](#), Dec. 31, 2017

One day in December 2010, a policewoman in a small and rather humdrum town in Tunisia slapped the face of Mohamed Bouazizi. The dispute was over his permit to be selling fruit and vegetables off a barrow. The injustice that he encountered, and the humiliation, drove the poor man to take his life. Just as a butterfly fluttering its wings is supposed to cause a cascade of faraway atmospheric effects, this suicide set off a movement of protest and solidarity in one Arab country after another. The monarchies and republics in which Arabs live are, in reality, dictatorships, and the time had apparently arrived for them to reform and take their place in what was supposed to be an emerging worldwide democratic order.

What became known as the Arab Spring did not live up to these expectations; far from it. Since 2010, Arab countries have suffered civil war, coups, terrorism, invasion by foreign powers, genocide, the sale of women in slave markets, the ruin of historic cities and monuments, the death of civilians by the hundreds of thousands, and the flight of refugees in their millions. The rise of the Islamic

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State, self-described as a caliphate, redesigned the boundaries of Syria and Iraq, countries that may not be reconstituted for a very long time, if ever. Islamist volunteers in this misappropriated territory murdered, beheaded, crucified, or tortured to death, often in public, whomever they pleased. Libya, Yemen, and Lebanon are also states in varying stages of collapse. A whole civilization seems to be coming apart.

The proper human response to such calamity is that something ought to be done about it. Elliott Abrams takes it for granted in *Realism and Democracy* that the United States can and should come to the rescue. His career has given him authority to comment on matters of power politics. In the Reagan administration, he was assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs (1981-85) and assistant secretary for inter-American affairs (1985-89); he later served as President George W. Bush's adviser for global democracy strategy (2005-09). His sympathies are very wide, his quotations from the academic literature are numerous and apt, and his prose is almost miraculously jargon-free.

His introductory chapter, almost a hundred pages long, is a kind of handbook to the mindsets of American policymakers concerning the Middle East in recent decades. The U.S. approach during the Cold War was perhaps an unfair great-power exercise but at least it kept the peace after its fashion. The most frequent cause of a clash during that era was some independent but rash manipulation on the part of one of the superpowers' clients. The superpowers' balancing of laissez-faire and a tight fist was usually enough to keep major clients such as Turkey and Iran, and even Arab-nationalist dictators, on the straight and narrow path of cooperation with them. Those times are over. In the absence of the external pressures of the Cold War, former clients are now in a position to pursue their own ambitions, forming alliances and enmities without regard for Western interests. Military intervention in Afghanistan, Libya, and elsewhere so far has only sustained or increased the level of instability. The sole alternative is to make a moralizing speech, but if the decision not to intervene militarily has already been taken, this is pointlessly sanctimonious.

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Put simply, what *Realism and Democracy* is asking is whether the United States should deal with the present free-for-all in the role of policeman or of paramedic. Abrams takes his lead from President Reagan, once his boss, who was convinced that whatever Arabs might do or say, basically they want the same freedom as Americans, and they are able to acquire it, too. In this view, freedom is the function of democracy, and democracy in turn is the function of human rights. In the course of his career, Abrams also met and admired the like-minded senators Scoop Jackson and Daniel Moynihan and, last but not least, George W. Bush, the president who did his best to give freedom to Iraqis. Proud to be an unreconstructed Reaganite, Abrams further awards himself the title of neo-con...

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[US Allies Should Back President Trump](#): Prof. Hillel Frisch, *BESA*, Jan. 28, 2018—It is not the business of allies to meddle in the domestic affairs of the US, and certainly not to take a position in domestic controversies over the performance of its leaders and politicians. It is the role of the vibrant democratic process in the US to handle such matters.

[Trump's Mideast Plan: Take it or Leave it](#): Alex Fishman, *Ynet*, Jan. 24, 2018—Knowing Donald Trump, he won't give anyone an early warning. He'll just deliver a festive speech and present his "ultimate deal" for the Middle East. There won't be long negotiations with the two parties, and he won't convene a conference, like American presidents have done in the past. He'll simply present everyone with a fact: This is the deal. Take it or leave it.

[Arab Regimes Terrified by Israel's Freedoms](#): Giulio Meotti, *Gatestone Institute*, Jan. 16, 2018—Fifty years have passed since many Arab countries were humiliated by Israel in 1967 in a war the Arabs started, with the explicit goal of destroying

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~~the Jewish State and throwing the Jews into the Mediterranean Sea. Today, Israel~~ has solid diplomatic relations with two of these countries — Jordan to Egypt — while Saudi officials speak with their Israeli security counterparts about the Iranian threat.

[‘The Middle East and World War III - Why No Peace?’: Alan Baker, *Jerusalem Post*, Jan. 1, 2018](#)—In what is a very ambitious and aspiring work, dramatically titled *The Middle East and World War III - Why No Peace?*, Dr. Michael Calvo, Sorbonne educated and a graduate of New York University, an expert in international law and comparative jurisprudence, takes on the complex, unique and evidently intractable Middle East conflict.