

**FALL OF I.S. IN IRAQ & SYRIA, AMIDST ONGOING SECTARIAN
CONFLICT, STRENGTHENS SHIITE AXIS**
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[Israel Takes On the Shia Crescent: Joseph Klein, *Frontpage*, Oct. 2, 2017](#) — Despite Israel's repeated warnings, Barack Obama's reckless appeasement of the Iranian regime has enabled its rise as a hegemonic threat in the Middle East region as well as a threat to international peace and security.

[Why There Is No Peace in the Middle East: Philip Carl Salzman, *Gatestone Institute*, Oct. 14, 2017](#)— Living as an anthropologist in a herding camp of the Yarahmadzai tribe of nomadic pastoralists in the deserts of Iranian Baluchistan clarified some of the inhibitions to peace in the Middle East.

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ISIS: SOME THINGS CANNOT BE KILLED OFF

Dr. Mordechai Kedar

[BESA](#), Oct. 26, 2017

As the city of Raqqa, the capital of the “Islamic State in Iraq and Syria,” falls to the Free Syrian Army, made up primarily of Kurdish and Syrian militias, the question is what the aftermath of ISIS will look like. The answer is threefold and involves the organization, its members, and its ideology.

The organization may well be routed and eradicated. The large swathe of territory it controlled will be divided among Syria, Iran, Turkey, and the Kurds, and its government institutions will become relics of the past. The attempt to reestablish the Islamic caliphate failed because the Muslim world - not only the “infidels” - despised its gruesome, seventh-century execution methods.

Most of the organization’s members are already elsewhere, however, and they carry a sense of righteousness in their hearts. They feel betrayed and will seek revenge against all those who attacked them. Those include the Kurds and the coalition countries; Muslims who stood by and did not help them, such as former Soviet bloc countries; and countries that helped but then abandoned them along the way, such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

These jihadists have dispersed in many countries. They are establishing proxies in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula, Libya, Yemen, Nigeria, Mali, the Philippines, and elsewhere, with each branch adjusting its structure and activities to the environment in which it operates. Variables include the degree to which local governments effectively wield power, the degree to which the local Muslim population is supportive, and the degree to which a terrorist organizational

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infrastructure already exists and can be utilized. We saw a similar phenomenon after the defeat of al-Qaida in Afghanistan in late 2001, when one of its offshoots settled in Iraq and joined with the local Sunni population and the remnants of Saddam Hussein's army to form ISIS. Beginning in April 2003, it began exploiting the weak central government in Baghdad, and in March 2011, the government in Damascus.

Every local proxy, however, will suffer from the same fundamental problems prevalent in any radical Islamic group. There will be disagreements within the group over Sharia law and its implementation; over ruling a territory or remaining a non-sovereign jihadist entity; the severity of punishment for offenders; the title of leader (whether he will be named caliph or not) and his authority; the group's relations with similarly minded organizations; the status structure within the organization (Arabs versus non-Arabs, Muslims by birth versus Muslims by conversion), and more. There will also be the problem of hostility between the Islamic organization and the local population, Muslim or otherwise, over which it wants to rule. In addition, the international community's traditionally negative view of Islamic terrorist organizations could lead to all-out war.

Another question is how the Islamic world will be affected by the dashed dream of a caliphate. The fall of ISIS will assuredly bolster those who oppose political Islam. On the other hand, the fall of the Sunni organization strengthens the Shiite axis. The slow crawl of Sunni leaders (Turkey and Saudi Arabia) towards Iran is one sign of the Shiite axis's growing power at the expense of the Sunnis. (US President Donald Trump's recent speech might slow this trend down, depending on the action the US takes.)

The idea of an Islamic caliphate is not dead. It is alive and well in religious scriptures, textbooks, Friday sermons, internet forums, and the hearts of many millions. In the near or distant future it will be resurrected, shake off the memory of recent events, and begin anew. There will always be people who dream of ancient glory, of the resurrection of ancestral Salafism and its forefathers - the prophet Muhammad and his cohort, who "lived an ideal and proper lifestyle and

showed us the right path for any place, time and environment.”

What is clear is that the fight against the “heretic, permissive, hedonistic, materialistic, drugged and inebriated West” will persist through lone-wolf or small-cell terrorist attacks. Countries around the world will continue to suffer from ramming attacks, stabbings, shootings, rapes, violence against women and children, public vandalism, and other variances of jihad against all those who do not belong to the religion of Muhammad. ISIS may well disappear as an organization, but the world is likely to continue feeling the evil ideology this organization has instilled in the hearts and minds of too many Muslims.

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REAL THREAT TO THE WEST: WHY CAN'T BRITAIN SEE IT?

Melanie Phillips

[*Jerusalem Post*](#), Oct. 26, 2017

Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman of Saudi Arabia has been making some remarkable comments. In an interview with The Guardian, the recently designated heir to the Saudi throne said the desert kingdom had been “not normal” for the past 30 years. He blamed the extremist Wahhabi form of Islam, which successive leaders “didn’t know how to deal with” and which had created a problem around the world.

“Now is the time to get rid of it,” he said. Saudi Arabia would now revert to “what we followed - a moderate Islam open to the world and all religions. Seventy percent of the Saudis are younger than 30. Honestly, we won’t waste 30 years of our life combating extremist thoughts. We will destroy them now and

immediately.”

Open to all religions? Churches and synagogues in Saudi Arabia? An end to the Wahhabi extremism which has spawned jihadism across the globe? Can he be serious? We know the prince is a reformer. Aware that the oil weapon is fast disappearing as the price of crude falls, he wants to open up the economy. That means modernization. Recently, Saudi women were given the right to drive. Religious police have been reined in and deprived of their powers of arrest. Small moves maybe, but anathema to the hard-line clerics.

Is it possible, though, to close Pandora’s jihadi box? Was Saudi Arabia ever religiously moderate? The prince says it became extreme only in response to the 1979 Iranian revolution. That is not quite true. The creed of Wahhabi Islam, which seeks to proselytize via the sword both non-Muslims and not-extreme-enough Muslims to its ferocious dogma, was imposed under the chieftain Muhammad al-Saud in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

After the Iranian revolution, an attempt was made to overthrow the House of Saud on the grounds that it had deviated from the true Wahhabi path. In a deal made with the clerics, the Saudi rulers not only hardened religious rules at home but poured money into spreading the jihad through mosques, madrasas and universities across the world.

The prince’s reformist agenda goes hand in hand with the kingdom’s tactical alliance with America in the common fight against Saudi Arabia’s arch enemy, Iran - in which it is cooperating below-the-radar with Israel, too. To the British government, with its close economic ties with Saudi Arabia, these reformist noises come as a relief, since Saudi human rights abuses continue to cause it severe embarrassment. Nevertheless, Britain is not on the same page as Saudi Arabia in trying to constrain Iran. Perversely, Britain remains intent upon a course of action that is instead empowering Iran by continuing to support the cynical and

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dangerous nuclear deal the UK helped US president Barack Obama broker in 2015.

President Donald Trump has now refused to certify Iran's compliance with that deal, saying Iran has breached it several times by exceeding the limits it set on heavy water and centrifuge testing. More remarkably, the deal's own terms allow Iran to make a mockery of its fundamental purpose in constraining Iran's nuclear weapons program, for the inspection procedure takes place only at sites where Iran has agreed to allow inspection. These exclude its military sites. The deal's proponents can claim that a robust inspection is being applied, while Iran is able to evade inspection of the sites that really matter.

Recently the International Atomic Energy Authority stated it could not verify that Iran is "fully implementing the agreement" by not engaging in activities that would allow it to make a nuclear explosive device. When it came to inspections, said the IAEA, "our tools are limited." According to the Institute for Science and International Security, as of the last quarterly report released in August, the IAEA had not visited any military site in Iran since implementation of the deal.

In any event, the deal does not prevent Iran from making nuclear weapons, because its "sunset clause" allows it to do so in 10 or 15 years' time - and reports suggest it has the capacity to develop them extremely quickly. Worse still, the deal allows Iran to develop ballistic missiles. Sanctions relief has enabled it to pour money into its proxy army Hezbollah, promote Hamas terrorism and spread its influence and terrorism into Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Yet the British government not only helped create but still implacably supports this terrible capitulation to Iranian power. Parting company with Trump, Britain's Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said the nuclear deal is "a crucial agreement that neutralized Iran's nuclear threat" which has "undoubtedly made the world a safer place." What planet is he living on? Iran is marching toward regional hegemony. In Iraq, there are reports that its Quds Force has been coordinating with Iraqi

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government officials to recruit the most effective ISIS fighters and release them from Iraqi prisons. These fighters are being organized, trained, and equipped to attack US and other regional forces.

Despite all this, however, the threat that worries Britain most is not Iran, but the prospect of war against Iran. The fact that Iran has been waging war against the West since 1979, in the course of which it has repeatedly attacked Western targets, murdered countless civilians and been responsible for the deaths of many British and American soldiers in Iraq, is brushed aside. Unless it really does reform itself, Saudi Arabia will continue to pose a threat from its religious extremism. Nevertheless, it is an ally against the greater enemy at this time: Iran. The Iranian regime must be defeated. It is shocking that, unlike President Trump, Britain is intent on appeasing it.

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ISRAEL TAKES ON THE SHIA CRESCENT

Joseph Klein

[Frontpage](#), Oct. 2, 2017

Despite Israel's repeated warnings, Barack Obama's reckless appeasement of the Iranian regime has enabled its rise as a hegemonic threat in the Middle East region as well as a threat to international peace and security. In 2009, Obama turned his back on millions of dissidents in the streets of Tehran and other Iranian cities, who were peacefully protesting the rigged election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president. In 2011, Obama precipitously removed the remaining U.S. combat troops from Iraq, giving rise to ISIS's re-emergence in Iraq from its bases in Syria. The radical Shiite Iranian regime purported to come to the "rescue" of both countries from the Sunni terrorists, turning Iraq into a virtual vassal state of the

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largest state sponsor of terrorism in the process. Obama's disastrous nuclear deal with Iran legitimized Iran's path to eventually becoming a nuclear-armed state, while immediately filling its coffers with billions of dollars to fund its aggression.

Meanwhile, Syria has become ground zero for Iran's execution of its regional ambitions, which is to establish its Shiite Crescent connecting with its allies, including Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. This plan has included the establishment of a land route that Iranian-backed militias secured in June, beginning on Iran's border with Iraq and running across Iraq and Syria all the way to Syria's Mediterranean coast. This road makes Iran's job easier in supplying arms by land, as well as by air and sea, to prop up Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime and to equip Iran's own forces fighting inside of Syria in support of Assad. This helps explain why Iran has placed so much importance on helping the Syrian regime establish control over the Deir ez-Zor area in eastern Syria, near the Iraqi border.

"Everything depends now on the Americans' willingness to stop this," said an Iraqi Kurdish official who was quoted in a New Yorker article. However, U.S.-led coalition forces apparently have done next to nothing to stop this major advance in Iran's Shiite Crescent expansion. "Obama ran down our options in Syria so thoroughly, by the time this administration took over," said Andrew Tabler, senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "The Iranian influence is spreading because they are so heavily involved in regime activities," Tabler added. "It's a new monster."

Furthermore, Iran has funded and armed its terrorist proxy Hezbollah, which has sent its militia from its home base of Lebanon to fight alongside Assad's forces. And Iran has used Syria as a transit point for shipment of sophisticated rockets to Hezbollah in Lebanon for future use against Israeli population centers. Despite the fact that Hezbollah has American blood on its hands, the U.S.-led coalition has chosen not to do anything about Hezbollah's presence in Syria, bought and paid for by Iran.

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While Israel chose not to take sides in Syria's civil war with military intervention of its own, it has bombed weapons storage facilities and convoys inside Syria for its own protection. Just recently, on September 7th, Israeli jets struck a Syrian weapons facility near Masyaf, which was reported to have been used for the production of chemical weapons and the storage of missiles. Israel will also do what is necessary to repel Iranian-backed forces if they edge too close to areas near the Golan Heights, shrinking the buffer between Israel and Iranian controlled territories.

However, such tactical measures may not be enough to thwart Iran's larger ambitions. In light of intelligence reports that Assad may be ready to invite Iran to set up military bases in Syria, Israeli leaders have concluded that they cannot wait until the Trump administration decides to deal more forcefully with Iran's growing use of Syria as a staging area for carrying out its expansionist Shiite Crescent strategy. "Their overriding concern in Syria is the free reign that all the major players there seem willing to afford Iran and its various proxies in the country," wrote Jonathan Spyer in an article for Foreign Policy. As long as nobody else is addressing the concern Iran's growing control raises in a satisfactory manner, "Israel is determined to continue addressing it on its own."

At least, Israel has a more sympathetic ear in the Trump administration than it did in the Obama administration for raising its concerns about Iran's growing threat, not only to Israel but to U.S. interests in the region and beyond. President Trump's sharp denunciation of the Iranian regime during his address to the UN General Assembly represented a welcome departure from the Obama administration's milquetoast approach to Iran.

As the U.S.-led coalition continues to drive ISIS from its bases of operation in Syria, the Trump administration has proclaimed its intention not to allow Iran to turn Syria into its own satellite, as Iran has essentially done in Iraq. National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster said that the "so called liberation of areas by Assad's forces and Iranian proxies could actually accelerate the cycle of violence and perpetuate conflict rather than get us to a sustainable outcome." He claimed

that the Trump administration's "objectives are to weaken Iranian influence across the region broadly," without discussing the means to accomplish those objectives. Whether the Trump administration follows through remains to be seen. In the meantime, Israel will have to deal with the fallout of Iran's ambitions in Syria itself.

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WHY THERE IS NO PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Philip Carl Salzman

[Gatestone Institute](#), Oct. 14, 2017

Living as an anthropologist in a herding camp of the Yarahmadzai tribe of nomadic pastoralists in the deserts of Iranian Baluchistan clarified some of the inhibitions to peace in the Middle East. What one sees is strong, kin-based, group loyalty defense and solidarity, and the political opposition of lineages, whether large or small. This raised the question how unity and peace could arrive in a system based on opposition.

Peace is not possible in the Middle East because values and goals other than peace are more important to Middle Easterners. Most important to Middle Easterners are loyalty to kin, clan, and cult, and the honour which is won by such loyalty. These are the cultural imperatives, the primary values, held and celebrated. When conflict arises and conflict-parties form based on loyal allegiance, the conflict is regarded as appropriate and proper.

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The results of absolute commitment to kin and cult groups, and the structural opposition to all others, can be seen throughout Middle Eastern history, including contemporary events, where conflict has been rife. Turks, Arabs and Iranians have launched military campaigns to suppress Kurds. Meanwhile, Christians, Yazidis, Baha'is and Jews, among others, have been, and continue to be ethnically cleansed. Arabs and Persians, and Sunnis and Shiites, each try to gain power over the other in a competition that has been one of the main underlying factors of the Iraq-Iran war, the Saddam Hussein regime, and the current catastrophe in Syria. Turks invaded Greek Orthodox Cyprus in 1974 and have occupied it since. Multiple Muslim states have invaded the minuscule Jewish state of Israel three times, and Palestinians daily celebrate the murder of Jews.

Some Middle Easterners, and some in the West, prefer to attribute the problems of the Middle East to outsiders, such as Western imperialists, but it seems odd to suggest that the local inhabitants have no agency and no responsibility for their activities in this disastrous region, high not only in conflict and brutality, but low by all world standards in human development.

If one looks to local conditions to understand local conflicts, the first thing to understand is that Arab culture, through the ages and at the present time, has been built on the foundation of Bedouin tribal culture. Most of the population of northern Arabia at the time of the emergence of Islam was Bedouin, and during the period of rapid expansion following the adoption of Islam, the Arab Muslim army consisted of Bedouin tribal units. The Bedouin, nomadic and pastoral for the most part, were formed into tribes, which are regional defense and security groups.

Bedouin tribes were organized by basing groups on descent through the male line. Close relatives in conflict activated only small groups, while distant relatives in conflict activated large groups. If, for example, members of cousin groups were in conflict, no one else was involved. But if members of tribal sections were in conflict, all cousins and larger groups in a tribal section would unite in opposition to the other tribal section. So, what group a tribesman thought himself a member

of was circumstantial, depending on who was involved in a conflict.

Relations between descent groups were always oppositional in principle, with tribes as a whole seeing themselves in opposition to other tribes. The main structural relation between groups at the same genealogical and demographic level could be said to be balanced opposition. The strongest political norm among tribesmen was loyalty to, and active support of, one's kin group, small or large. One must always support closer kin against more distant kin. Loyalty was rewarded with honour. Not supporting your kin was dishonourable. The systemic result was often a stand-off, the threat of full scale conflict with another group of the same size and determination acting as deterrence against frivolous adventures. That there were not more conflicts than the many making up tribal history, is due to that deterrence...

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[The Fall of Kirkuk: An IRGC Production](#): Jonathan Spyer, *Breaking Israel News*, Oct. 22, 2017—Iraqi forces took Kirkuk city from the Kurds this week with hardly a shot fired. Twenty-two Kurdish fighters were killed in the sporadic and disorganized resistance, while seven Iraqi soldiers also lost their lives.

[What Iraq's Recent Moves Against Kurds Mean for Israel and Region](#): Seth J. Frantzman, *Jerusalem Post*, Oct. 26, 2017—On Sunday, Iraq Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi began a historic visit to Saudi Arabia, where he is meeting the king of Saudi Arabia and US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

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[The U.S. is on a Collision Course with Iran in the Middle East: Liz Sly, Washington Post, Oct. 26, 2017](#)—President Trump’s assertive new strategy toward Iran is already colliding with the reality of Tehran’s vastly expanded influence in the Middle East as a result of the Islamic State war.

[Between the Iranian Threat and the Palestinian State Threat: Maj. Gen. \(res.\) Gershon Hacohen, Arutz Sheva, Oct. 22, 2017](#)—The greatest threat to Israel’s existence is neither Shiite militias on the Golan border nor the Iranian nuclear threat, which are of physical and military nature.