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**AS THE ARAB WORLD CRUMBLES, NEW ALLIANCES EMERGE**

*Dr. Mordechai Kedar*

*[Arutz Sheva](#), Aug. 25, 2016*

Several looming challenges pose a clear and present danger to the Arab world's ability to continue as a viable culture and functioning political system. At the head of the list are Iran, Islamic State, and the deterioration of the status of the state itself in countries where terror, motivated mainly by Islam and its dictates, is on the rise.

The Iranian challenge received a boost last year from the signing of Iran's Nuclear Agreement with the West and the billions of dollars accompanying it, part of which will be invested in pouring more boiling jet fuel on the epicenters of Middle Eastern bloodshed and tension - Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon - in a way that poses a direct threat to certain key countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The agreement will also make it easier for Iran to export the revolution to other parts of the world, starting with Europe and America.

The Islamic State challenge continues to threaten Syria and Iraq directly, but its influence is increasing in other focal points such as Libya and the Sinai Peninsula. Jordan, too, has been the scene of activities meant to prepare the population for the day after the monarchy, when an Islamic State-type regime can come to power. Although Islamic State lost territory in its battles with the Iraqi and Syrian armies, it is far from losing its ongoing ability to spread terror and propaganda and its defeat is not at all a sure thing.

The modern Arab state - as an ideology and political entity - is facing several difficult questions. Many of its citizens ask why they are forced to live in states

created, designed and planned by the West to promote its own interests. Why, they ask, must they live under dictatorships where a ruling elite runs an economically and morally corrupt government? Social media are the main platform for expressing these opinions and serve as the stage where large numbers of people take part in a public debate that puts their own countries in the dock.

There is a not insignificant number of people in the Arab world who have reached the conclusion that it is time to act against their own states by means of intimidation, threats, terrorist acts and murder. The main leader of this trend is the Muslim Brotherhood and the political Islamic organizations it spawned. These organizations make use of social media to organize, plan, get new volunteers, all the while sending their messages anonymously and without the constraints of government censorship.

A clear example of the deteriorating situation is the terror state that was established in Gaza nine years ago, in June 2007, when an Islamic terrorist organization - Hamas - took over an area that is home to over one million people and established an entity that is the political implementation of the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology. The Arab world is paralyzed and prevented from reacting because every word against Hamas is immediately interpreted as being pro-Israel and therefore totally unacceptable in Arab circles. The disastrous situation was actually strengthened when wealthy and important states such as Qatar and Turkey stood behind the Hamas state and aided it financially and politically, while Iran provided it with military support.

Meanwhile, the same phenomenon is developing in Lebanon, where the Hezbollah terrorist organization is taking over an entire country and turning it into a state run according to decisions made in Tehran. The most crucial decision that Iran made for Lebanon was throwing the country into the midst of the fierce civil war raging in Syria between Assad and his enemies. This challenging state of events has been ruling the Arab scene for years with no solution in sight. Iran not only is not disappearing, its influence is getting stronger by the day. Islamic State is also

not disappearing, despite the West's declaration of war against it. The modern Arab state is not seen as a legitimate answer, causing the internal terror fueled by Islam to get more and more powerful.

In the past, the United States was a stabilizing factor that preserved the political systems in the region, but it has decided to step back and leave the area ripe prey for Iran, Sunni Jihadists, Turks and lately the Russians who have arrived to secure their own interests. Sadly, those who suffer most from this maelstrom of problems are peaceful citizens who once suffered under dictatorships and now suffer under Jihadist swords. They are fleeing en masse to Europe.

Israel can be accepted more easily while the Arab world is in this miserable situation because it does not pose a threat to any nations except the two terrorist mini states that have arisen in the Middle East: the Gazan Hamas and the Lebanese Hezbollah. Islamic State will also be a potential target for Israel from the second that its territory reaches any Israeli border, so that Israel has been transformed from being a problem to being a solution to problems.

The first Arab country to realize the Israel solution was Egypt, which shares Israel's concern about terror and Islamic State, especially since IS has established a branch in the Sinai. Al Sisi's Egypt, since 2013, works stubbornly and steadily, with minimum sensitivity, against Hamas. Egypt closed the Rafiah Pass almost hermetically, and has almost entirely eliminated the tunnel system into Egypt that the Gazans worked hard to dig. Those tunnels were not used only for weapons smuggling - an entire circus once arrived in Gaza that way! Rumors have it that Israel is helping Egypt in the shared struggle of both countries against Islamic State's "Sinai Province," an organization that was once called "Ansar Beit al Maqdis" and was affiliated with al Qaeda, and whose hands are smeared with the blood of hundreds of Egyptian civilians and soldiers.

It has reached the point where the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukri,

refused to accuse Israel of engaging in terror when it battles Palestinian Arabs. In his opinion, "Israel's history forces it to grant an important place to security because Israeli society is faced with challenges that demand strict attention to security, control of the area and the sealing of any breaches in its protective shield." He might well say the exact same words regarding Egypt. Shoukri also noted that it is impossible to accuse Israel of terror since there is no accepted international definition for terror. This remark is actually a complaint aimed at all the Islamic countries which refuse to define terror in legal terms because doing so would by definition point to Islam as the factor motivating most terrorists today. The US government is not eager to identify the connection between Islam and terror either, so that his words seem to be pointed in that direction as well...

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## **BIBI THE STRATEGIST**

*Lazar Berman*

[Commentary](#), Aug. 21, 2016

In June, the Israeli journalist Amir Tibon wrote an article for *Politico* detailing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's long-standing and bitter fights with Israel's defense leaders. Former IDF chiefs of staff and spymasters described Netanyahu as messianic, driven by personal calculations, and incapable of protecting Israel's interests. His former defense minister, Moshe Yaalon, said the prime minister's conduct had caused him to lose faith in Netanyahu, and ex- Shin Bet Chief Yuval Diskin said he "represents six years of constant failures." Bibi-bashing of this sort is neither new nor limited to Israel. Diskin's remarks echoed the charges of former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who wrote in his 2014 memoir, *Duty*, that under Netanyahu "Israel's strategic situation is

worsening, its own actions contributing to its isolation.” Gates claimed that the Jewish state was acting “strategically stupid” as it pursued tactical gains. “Time,” he concluded, “is not on Israel’s side.”

Messianism and stupidity are as bad a combination as one could find in a nation’s leader. What, then, might Diskin and Gates have made of the accord Netanyahu reached with Turkey right around the time the *Politico* piece appeared? Six years after Turkey withdrew its ambassador from Israel and took to obsessively condemning the Jewish state, Netanyahu got Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to drop his key demands and agree to resume full diplomatic relations with Israel. That victory for Netanyahu’s statecraft is one example of many that highlight an enduring contradiction between his reputation for ineptitude and his record of achievement. And considering what Israel is up against, almost any foreign-policy success would be noteworthy.

Since Netanyahu regained the premiership in 2009, Israel has faced a multitude of challenges—from Turkey’s hostile turn, to Iran’s nuclear program, to Hamas’s cross-border tunnels, to rocket attacks on civilians, to a rash of terrorist knifings and automobile attacks. Any one of them would try the sharpest strategic thinkers. What’s more, Egypt and Syria both collapsed into turmoil during his time in office. The civil war in Syria turned Israel’s quietest border into an ungoverned zone filled by rival jihadist groups. The fall of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt meant that a Muslim Brotherhood government temporarily bordered the Gaza Strip and could give aid to its Palestinian faction, Hamas. And while Egypt’s current leader, Abdel-Fattah Al-Sissi has since fought Hamas aggressively, the Sinai Peninsula has become an ungoverned home to terrorists who pledge allegiance to ISIS.

Then there’s the United States. With the election of Barack Obama, America’s approach to the Middle East changed in drastic ways. Determined to build bridges to the Muslim world, Obama saw Israeli settlements as the central obstacle to peace with the Palestinians. Thus, he instituted a policy of maintaining “daylight” between Washington and Jerusalem in hopes of wearing down Israel’s supposed obstinacy on settlements. To make matters worse, Obama and his advisers

evinced a strong animus against Netanyahu that only escalated as time progressed. Washington scaled back its influence at the same moment that Sunni-Shia, tribal, and ethnic battles began gutting Arab states. Iran capitalized on the resulting power vacuum to expand its reach in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and beyond. As for Iran’s nuclear program, Obama and the Islamic Republic entered into the P5+1 Joint Plan of Action. What’s become known simply as “the Iran deal” has both enriched and rehabilitated the regime while leaving its nuclear program largely intact and free from serious scrutiny.

How has Netanyahu handled this dizzying constellation of threats? Although far from perfect, he has shown himself to be a careful thinker, a leader whose reading of complex situations has allowed him to outmaneuver adversaries and protect Israel’s interests. The growing threat from Hamas and the dangers of a rising Iran have not abated. But in reviewing Netanyahu’s actions as prime minister, we emerge with a list of improbable foreign-policy accomplishments of which most world leaders would be proud...

Problems generated by the Syrian civil war have exploded outward in every direction. To name a few: Refugees have spilled over into Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, and Europe. Terrorist groups inside Syria, especially ISIS, pose a strategic threat to Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt. Additionally, ISIS continues to carry out major terrorist attacks in the heart of Europe. Yet Israel, on Syria’s western border, remains effectively out of the fray.

Although Syria was long an enemy of Israel, its collapse posed a major strategic challenge for Israeli leaders. Before Syria spiraled out of control, Israel had hoped for (and repeatedly tried to attain) a peace agreement with Damascus. With the Syrian state in chaos, this was no longer even a remote possibility. And with ISIS taking the lead in the fight against Assad, it was clear that Israel couldn’t support either side. In any event, Israel had to deal with more immediate threats emerging from the meltdown. Some of the terrorist groups fighting Assad—including the Al-Nusra Front and the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade—had gained a foothold along Israel’s Golan Heights border with Syria. There were (and are) still more

complicating factors. Mortar fire from the conflict occasionally strays into Israel. Druze residents of the Israeli Golan Heights maintain close ties to family members and other co-religionists on the Syrian side and have vowed to take action if jihadist groups threaten Syrian Druze. And Hezbollah and Iran have tried to take advantage of the chaos to open a new front against Israel in the Golan.

Through it all, Israel has stayed safe. Netanyahu has been quietly shaping the situation to protect his country’s interests. Israel has reached a stable—and officially unconfirmed—understanding with rebel groups on its border. These groups, including some jihadist factions, know they don’t have to protect their western flank from Israel. In return, they refrain from attacking Israel and keep others from doing so as well. In coordination with IDF forces on the border, rebel groups hand over wounded fighters and civilians to be treated in Israeli hospitals. Israel has also transferred aid to these groups, but it is unclear if this goes beyond food and medicine. There is likely intelligence sharing as well...

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### **A COVENANT OF SHADOWS**

*Yaakov Amidror*

[Israel Hayom](#), Aug. 5, 2016

Many of the world's nations are looking on in surprise and admiration at the ever-strengthening ties between Israel and the more important Sunni Arab countries in the region — the open relationship with Egypt and Jordan, with which Israel maintains official diplomatic relations, but also the informal relationships with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates.



**This shift appears to be fueled by three main factors: First, these Sunni countries fear Iran's growing power over a Shiite bloc, which threatens the security as well as the unity of the Sunni states. There is an ancient religious conflict between the Sunni majority and the Shiite minority, but the minority enjoys the advantage of a singular leadership that is willing to do anything to change the status of the Shiites in the Middle East. This leadership, which sits in Tehran, is spearheading orchestrated and focused efforts to liberate the Shiites in Yemen, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, and defend the Shiites in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. The objective is to create an uninterrupted distribution of Shiites from Tehran through Baghdad to Beirut.**

**Meanwhile, Iran is trying to undermine the Sunni dominance on the Arab side of the Gulf between the Saudi Peninsula and Iran: Saudi Arabia, with its Shiite minority, in the oil-rich region; Bahrain, which underwent a Shiite coup attempt; and Yemen, where Saudi Arabia is fighting with the Sunni majority against the Iranian-backed Houthi minority. The Sunni-Shiite conflict also has a nationalist aspect. It is impossible to ignore the fact that Iran is focusing its efforts exclusively on Arab countries. This nationalist struggle also manifests itself in inter-Shiite disputes, especially in Iraq, where the city of Najaf was once considered the most important Shiite city, but has since been replaced by the Iranian city of Qom...**

**The second factor fueling the Sunni countries' concerns is the threat of extreme Salafism led by the Islamic State group. The group's Arabic acronym, Daesh, stands for "the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria," but today, the organization is active in Sinai and in Libya as well, and it has active chapters in Africa and in Europe, as the recent wave of terrorist attacks may indicate. Therefore, the simple name "Islamic State" may be more apt.**

**The expansion of the group's activities poses a threat to the Sunni states, because they represent an enemy of the highest order. In Egypt, the threat is even more**

**ARAB WORLD “CRUMBLES”, U.S. M.E. INFLUENCE WANES, BUT  
ISRAEL STRENGTHENS REGIONAL ALLIANCES**

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pronounced thanks to IS deployment in parts of Sinai and its collaboration with Hamas, the Palestinian chapter of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood – the mortal enemies of the current Egyptian leadership. In Jordan and in Saudi Arabia, Islamic State threatens the regime from within, because in both countries there is extensive sympathy for the group among various sectors in the population. Even if the coalition of nations currently working to combat IS manages to dramatically diminish the areas under its control in Iraq and Syria, the ideology propagated by the group will still pose a very palpable threat to the Sunni states. Moreover, the coalition is currently having trouble maintaining its momentum against IS, following a string of important victories.

The third factor stems from the general sense that the U.S. has abandoned its allies in their time of need, intending to scale back its involvement in the region. In Egypt, this feeling is founded on America's having abandoned deposed President Hosni Mubarak and having appeared to support the Muslim Brotherhood. In Saudi Arabia and in the Persian Gulf, the frustration stems from the fact that they view the landmark agreement between the West and Iran, spearheaded by the U.S., as an American capitulation. The countries in the region have been very disappointed with the U.S.'s conduct toward Mubarak on the one hand, and toward Syrian President Bashar Assad, who continues to massacre Sunnis uninhibited, on the other. They realize that not only is the U.S. no longer on their side in the fight against Iran, the U.S. expects them to make concessions to Iran. It is clear to the Sunni states, which once viewed the U.S. as a superpower whose mere existence was enough to stop any threat they faced, that things have profoundly changed. Even if the U.S. is still a superpower, it has lost the will to use its power in the Middle East. Furthermore, when it does exercise its power, like in leading the anti-IS coalition, action is taken sparingly and extremely cautiously. And now, the U.S. is compromising with its adversaries, as indicated by the weak American response to Russia's increasing involvement in Syria...

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## **JEW-HATRED AT THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM**

*Bradley Martin*

*[American Spectator](#), Aug. 25, 2016*

The 2016 annual meeting of the World Social Forum took place in Montreal this month to strategize and coordinate campaigns in support of anti-globalization, anti-capitalism, and now anti-Semitism. Viewed as a progressive alternative to the World Economic Forum’s annual meeting in Davos, it began with an anti-Semitic cartoon depicting a stereotypical hook-nosed Orthodox Jew controlling the United States government as well as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by proxy. The cartoon, part of a now-canceled talk by Seyed Ali Mousavi, titled “Terrorizm [sic], Wahhabism [sic], Zionism,” was criticized by two Canadian members of Parliament, leading to removal of the Canadian government logo from the forum’s list of partners.

Although Mousavi’s talk was canceled, the WSF website lists at least a dozen other events intended to promote the wholesale boycott of Israel. They include a workshop comparing the calling-out of anti-Semitism to McCarthyism, headlined by Diane Ralph, a notorious conspiracy theorist who has blamed Israel and the U.S. for staging the September 11 terrorist attacks. WSF attendees also heard from Sabine Friesinger, a former student union president involved in the violent riot preventing current-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from speaking at Concordia University in 2002. Elderly Holocaust survivor Thomas Hecht was physically assaulted during that riot.

Another speaker at the conference was Omar Barghouti, co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel. In a 2014 speech at UCLA, Barghouti denied the existence of the Jewish people, claiming that Jews are not indigenous to Israel and have no right to self-determination or collective rights. Nonetheless, Barghouti rejected the notion that BDS is anti-Semitic. The anti-

Jewish bigotry at the conference was not only shameless, but also deceitful. While Bargouti’s presentation promoted academic BDS against Israel, he himself is a student at Tel Aviv University, currently pursuing his Ph.D. after having completed his MA in philosophy at the Israeli institution. When asked about this blatant contradiction, Bargouti replied that his studies were a “personal matter.” Bargouti also claimed that BDS was opposed to violence, yet just a day earlier he spoke alongside Friesinger at a militant roundtable presented by the WSF that focused on international BDS coordination against Israel. Bargouti has previously voiced approval of Palestinian violence against Israel. Jamal Jomaa, of the Palestinian BDS National Committee, echoed Bargouti’s insistence that BDS is non-violent, and then went on to support the Palestinian right to commit violence against Israel...

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*Bradley Martin is a CIJR Student Intern*

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[Can Israel and the Arab States Be Friends?: New York Times, Aug. 27, 2016](#)—Israel and Saudi Arabia have no formal diplomatic relations. The Saudis do not even recognize Israel as a state. Still, there is evidence that ties between Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Arab states and Israel are not only improving but, after developing in secret over many years, could evolve into a more explicit alliance as a result of their mutual distrust of Iran.

**[Why ‘Cash for Prisoners’ May End Up Being Least of U.S. Concerns Over Payment to Iran: Aaron David Miller, \*Wall Street Journal\*, Aug. 22, 2016](#)**—It’s not clear how much worse things will get for the Obama administration over its \$400 million payment to Iran in January, but the cash-for-prisoners scandal may end up being the least of U.S. concerns in all this.

**[Israel's Strategic Imperative: Prof. Louis René Beres, \*Arutz Sheva\*, Aug. 7, 2016](#)**—In world politics, preserving equilibrium has a recognizably sacramental function. The reason is obvious. Without at least minimum public order, planetary relations would descend rapidly, and perhaps irremediably, into a profane disharmony. In any such global "state of nature," we may further extrapolate from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, the life of individual nations could quickly become "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

**[Implications of US Disengagement from the Middle East: Prof. Efraim Inbar, \*BESA\*, July 26, 2016](#)**—The United States is retreating from the Middle East. The adverse implications of this policy shift are manifold, including: the acceleration of Tehran’s drive to regional hegemony, the palpable risk of regional nuclear proliferation following the JCPOA, the spread of jihadist Islam, and Russia’s growing penetration of the region. Manifest US weakness is also bound to have ripple effects far beyond the Middle East, as global players question the value of partnership with an irresolute Washington.