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## A New Global Construct and Realigned Relationships

WAYNE MADSEN

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Like a scene out of a Hollywood epic movie, Saudi Arabian King Salman journeyed to Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, with an entourage of 1000 aides and servants, including ten Cabinet ministers and 25 Saudi princes traveling aboard four Boeing 747s and two Boeing 777s. Indonesian president Joko Widodo termed the visit part of a «strategic partnership» between Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. Salman also visited Malaysia, which has been embroiled in a major political scandal arising from the acceptance by its prime minister, Najib

Razak, of a \$1 billion «gift» from a stated-owned Saudi company. Political opponents of Razak have termed the gift a bribe.

The Saudi power projection into Southeast Asia and the trip of the Saudi king to Indonesia, the first such visit by a Saudi monarch since 1970, when Saudi King Faisal visited the country, comes as U.S. President Donald Trump indicates that the United States will place its own interests ahead of those of other countries. In a speech before a joint session of the U.S. Congress, Trump also stated that it his policy that the United States «will respect the sovereign rights of nations» and that his administration will «respect the right of all nations to chart their own path».

Trump also signaled that while he will «respect historic institutions» – a clear reference to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations, and the European Union, all of which he has criticized in the past – he expects U.S. allies in NATO, in the Middle East, and the Pacific «to take a direct and meaningful role in both strategic and military operations, and pay their fair share of the cost».

Trump has congratulated the United Kingdom on the results of the Brexit referendum and the decision to depart the EU. Trump, furthermore, hopes that France, the Netherlands, and other EU members will go their own separate ways from the «Eurocracy» establishment in Brussels.

While Trump has called for huge increases in military spending by the Pentagon, there is clearly a shift taking place in global alignments owing to America's new policy of bilateralism as opposed to multilateralism. Because of what appears to be an end of the «coalition of the willing» constructs adopted by President George W. Bush and continued by President Barack Obama, nations like Saudi Arabia and others are looking to creating new strategic relationships.

Salman's immediate and disconcerting goal for visiting predominantly Muslim Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and Maldives seems to boost the already-strict Muslim societies in Brunei and Maldives and encourage the Islamic radicalization of Indonesia and Malaysia, both of which have sizeable minorities of Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and other religious groups. Recently, Saudi-financed clerics have encouraged Islamic proselytizing among non-Muslims students attending public schools in Malaysia; the firebombing of churches in Indonesia and Malaysia; adoption of strict Sharia law in certain fundamentalist regions like Aceh province on Sumatra in Indonesia and the Malaysian states of Kelantan and Terengganu; complete with flogging and amputation of limbs; and severe restrictions on Christian missionaries.

Beyond spreading radical Wahhabism, the Saudis are adopting a «look east» strategic policy. Salman and his entourage are also visiting Japan and China. In Beijing, Salman may get an earful about Saudi support for Muslim Uighurs fighting in China's western Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) for an independent Islamic «East Turkestan» state.

The fact that a Saudi king is involving himself in a region, where there is a potential military conflict between China and various South East Asian nations over the control of islands and

waters in the South China Sea, serves as but one example of how various nations are beginning to fill the void left by the U.S. disengagement from various geo-politically important regions of the world. It was not too long ago that President Obama was heralding his economic and military «pivot to Asia», which was predicated upon the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the reinforcing of U.S. military relationships with Australia, Philippines, Singapore, Japan, and South Korea. With Trump's withdrawal from the TPP, Australia is looking toward China for closer economic ties, the Philippines wants to end the presence of U.S. troops in the country, and, as seen with the visit of King Salman, Indonesia and Malaysia are hammering out new strategic partnerships in the Middle East.

The United Arab Emirates is also extending its influence beyond the Gulf. It recently announced it was building a military base in Berbera on the Gulf of Aden in the breakaway and internationally-unrecognized Republic of Somaliland. Somaliland declared independence from civil war-torn Somalia in 1991. The Somaliland base joins a UAE base already in operation in Assab in Eritrea.

The UAE's Berbera base was criticized by neighboring Djibouti, which hosts a Chinese naval base at the port of Obock and an American base at Camp Lemonier, next to Djibouti-Ambouli International Airport. There was a time when it was only the United States and France that maintained military bases in the Horn of Africa. With global strategic realignment, that is no longer the case. France continues to maintain a military presence in Djibouti and Japan established its first military base abroad in a 12-hectare site adjoining the U.S. base at Camp Lemonier. In addition, the Saudis are planning on a military base in Djibouti to support its genocidal campaign against anti-Saudi forces in Yemen. Turkey also established its first military base in Africa in the Somali capital of Mogadishu.

The United States once enjoyed the distinction of having one of the largest bases in the Indian Ocean on the island of Diego Garcia in the British Indian Ocean Territory. However, the Americans now have company, in addition to the sudden appearance of military bases in the Horn of Africa. India has built naval bases on Assumption island in the Seychelles and in the Agalega archipelago, a territory of Mauritius that lies 1000 kilometers north of Mauritius. India also maintains a radar and signals intelligence facility in northern Madagascar, near Ambilobe, and a naval depot in Muscat, Oman.

As what can be called the «Trump Doctrine» takes effect, similar «force projections» by nations that have traditionally not operated militarily from their own local regions will become more commonplace. France has, for some time, maintained an Abu Dhabi military base, which is known Camp de la Paix.

Singapore is negotiating for air base rights, to be used mostly for training Singaporean Air Force pilots, at the Ohakea Air Base in New Zealand and at Anderson Air Force Base in the U.S. territory of Guam. Singapore also maintains training bases in Townsville and Shoalwater Bay in Queensland, Australia. The recent seizure by Hong Kong Customs of nine Terrex armored vehicles returning by sea from joint Singaporean-Taiwanese military exercises in Taiwan, maneuvers that have been held since 1975, pointed to the possibility of a permanent Singaporean

military presence in Taiwan, although Singapore recognizes only the People's Republic of China as the sole government of China.

The South Pacific may soon join the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean in seeing a scramble for foreign naval and air bases. China is known to be interested in such bases in nations that are major recipients of Chinese aid, including Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu. The United States considers the South Pacific as an «American lake,» but as its regional surrogates, Australia and New Zealand, seek their own new strategic relationships, other state players, including Japan, India, Russia, Germany, and Canada, may establish their own military presence in the region.

The Trump Doctrine is bringing about a new world construct; however, it is not the «new world order» envisaged by the globalist majordomos in Washington, Brussels, London, Frankfurt, and New York.