

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نياشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<https://consortiumnews.com/2015/04/14/saudis-pour-oil-on-the-mideast-fire/>

Saudis Pour Oil on the Mideast Fire

Anthony F. Shaker

April 14, 2015

Saudi Arabia, now in alliance with Israel and with tacit U.S. approval, is dragging the Middle East into a nightmare of sectarian conflict, pitting its own warplanes and Sunni terrorists against Shiites, Christians and other minorities as part of a misguided competition with Iran, as Anthony F. Shaker describes.

While denouncing Iran and its supposed Yemeni “Shi’a” allies in a recent speech, the governor of Saudi Arabia’s eastern province, Saud ibn Nayyef bin Abdel Aziz, put his country’s Shi’a community — fellow citizens — squarely in his sights.

“While our country is going through what it is going through and standing together as one bloc,” he ranted, “we find the descendants of the Safavid Abdullah ibn Saba who try to divide that bloc.”

“Abdullah ibn Saba” refers to a Seventh-Century Jewish convert to Islam whose existence is uncertain but who has become a useful myth. True to every other brand of Salafist takfiris, Wahhabi clerics and Saudi government officials alike insist that a Jew “founded” Shi’ism and that his purpose was to destroy Islam from within.

Happily for them this unsavory and, to historians, comically false claim connects “Iran” and “Shi’ism” to the “Jews.”

Yet, there is nothing out of the ordinary in the governor's diatribe. The United States' second most important ally in the Middle East fully intends to play its sectarian card to the hilt. The signs are everywhere.

Saudi Arabia has for decades been operating international youth organizations and "Islamic centers" dedicated to the spread of the Wahhabi ideology in Great Britain, North and South America, Asia, and Africa. These organizations have created the "religious" environment that is enticing so many young people to join jihadi causes in Syria, Iraq and other countries.

Thanks to their pervasive influence, the Saudi government has been able to take on the role of defending "Sunni" Islam. But there is a reason why it has taken decades for such patronizing revisionism of Islam to gain traction among Sunni Muslims.

The Saudis' official religion, Wahhabism, was founded by an itinerant heretic named Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. Before he died in 1792, he managed to make alliance with violent tribesmen of the al-Saud tribe in the remote Najd desert. At the behest of the Ottomans, though, Egyptian ruler Muhammad Ali promptly crushed the movement in a military campaign that lasted seven years starting in 1811.

British Interference

It was only thanks to the British-orchestrated insurrection against the Ottomans around World War I that the House of Saud re-entered history big time. It is hardly a coincidence that wartime marked also the precise point in time when terrorism became an element in the Middle East equation.

With the situation in Palestine approaching a point of no return, the British government wanted quickly to install al-Saud as the new custodians of the two sacred cities, Mecca and Medina, based on a view modeled explicitly on the Vatican State. It mattered little that such an institution would be utterly alien to Muslims.

The British ended up placing Saudi princelings in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere, for good measure. This was how the House of Saud was able to extend its influence in many directions, laying the foundation for a new ethnicity in the form of "Arabism," given the weakness of its Islamic credentials.

It is often forgotten that Wahhabism permeated even the secular debate in the Arabic-speaking world, especially in Egypt in the 1920s and 1930s. Many movements around the world began to pattern themselves on Mussolini's fascist phalanges. The Muslim Brotherhood is only the most prominent. They benefited from both the latter's organizational strengths and the illusion of a homegrown, Wahhabi-inspired religiosity.

"Arabism" and "pan-Arabism" of course, are the other card that Saudi Arabia has recently been playing at the League of Arab States to keep other "Arabs" in line in times of crisis — specifically, against Iran. Never mind that before World War I the word "Arab" used to carry a distinctly pejorative meaning. The truth is that the Wahhabi Saudis have been playing both cards

since World War II for purposes that have nothing to do with either religion or the welfare of the Arabic-speaking world.

While their brazen anti-Shi'ism has taken alarming proportions since war broke out in Syria, the politics of "religious purity" is looking more like a flimsy cover, designed less to accommodate their designs on the region than to hide a deep-seated panic.

With Saudi Arabia's frontal assault on the sovereign state of Yemen, its armed forces and its fragile ethnic mosaic, Saudi King Salman thought he had executed a master stroke by extending the sectarian virus to yet another country, with no consequences except for Iran. Backed by his trillion-dollar paper economy, King Salman continues to point accusingly at Iran for supposedly arming the Houthi-led Ansarullah party and for wanting to "dominate" neighboring states.

Unfortunately for the aging Saudi monarch, it takes two to tango. Iran for obvious strategic reasons would never think of playing a similar card even if it wanted to. Why should it? It has lots of "Sunni" friends.

The most that the Saudis can boast, on the other hand, are surreptitious links with a cult-like organization of Iranian exiles called the Mujahidin-e Khalq, with its well-documented history of mass murder and a longstanding association with the Israeli Mossad. This underlying imbalance of forces aggravates the Saudi hysteria over Iran's "overreach" in Yemen, even though the Zaydis there are doctrinally closer to the four branches of so-called Sunni Islam than to Twelver Shi'a.

In the real world, a Saudi miscalculation in Yemen, triggered by the Americans' defensively reactive approval of the air strikes, would risk incalculable and largely self-inflicted damage to Western interests. Instead of toning down this Saudi sectarianism, though, King Salman is ratcheting it up on the home front too, as he tries to repress the Shi'a community in the oil-producing eastern province.

"If you look at any local media here as well as in the mosques, it is all full of sectarianism. Everybody is talking about Shiite and Sunni, saying the Shiites endanger the safety of the Sunnis," *Middle East Eye* reported one eastern resident of Qatif as saying.

A Tight Corner

The Saudis have now maneuvered themselves into a tight corner. Not even Saudi-dependent Pakistan will come to their aid; and Egypt is "there but not there." If the Saudi king fails to "destroy" the Houthi-led Ansarullah party — a goal he has repeatedly declared — together with the bulk of the Yemeni army, he could never regain his country's pride of place under the American wing, alongside Israel. In his tunnel vision, that would only leave Iran unshackled and free to "reign" wherever it pleases.

So far, Saudi Arabia has been relying on secret international networks that the Saudis helped create but which are associated with al-Qaeda, foremost, but also the Syrian Ahrar al-Sham (of

the Islamic Front), Nusra Front and the Islamic State (also known as ISIS or ISIL). The object is to destabilize or pile pressure on any wayward state.

These organizations may be the Saudis' only remaining true allies in the region but they have almost unlimited manpower. Their members are drawn from more than a hundred nations, the largest European contingency of which has been consistently French. Every few months a new army is raised from the tens of thousands of rootless indoctrinated "Muslims" rushing to visit unspeakable violence upon fellow Muslims and minorities.

There is now solid evidence that Saudi Arabia, together with Turkey, is facilitating this flow of jihadist manpower.

Just before Saudi Arabia's bombardment of Yemen, terrorist organizations received a second wind in Syria from the thousands of specially trained fighters that had slipped inside the country. They seized a key town near the Jordanian border in the south and the provincial capital of Idlib near Turkey in the north. Saudi officials have made no secret that they were involved and that a new management has taken over, a clear rebuff to American reticence.

Israel is very happy. It has been trying for months to provide cover and logistics to allow those same terrorists to hold on to the Golan permanently, where it has no intention of ceding annexed Syrian territory, peace treaty or no peace.

Foreign-sponsored Wahhabis have proved their mettle fomenting violent sectarian hatreds where none existed before in the history of Islamic civilization. But their real talent is state demolition, under the cover of religious ideology. Nothing more. They have the means to impose their ramshackled set of "Shari'a" laws, the legal origins of which no one can quite make out.

These are not your run-of-the-mill Che Guevara idealists, liberationist "Vietcong" or even the diabolical Khmer Rouges. Nor are they "traditionalists" by any stretch of the imagination. Yet, theirs is the same vicious ideology that is broadcast daily and prayer-like across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Slowly Awakening

Western politicians and media are only now awakening to Saudi Arabia's sickly obsession, since the 1980s, with cleansing Islam of its Shi'a Muslim populations. Although this is integral to Saudi foreign policy, there is an interesting element of skullduggery to the whole affair.

The Saudis have been playing the anti-Shi'a card in secret league with the "Jewish State," as Middle East specialists today can vouch. It was in "secret" only because nearly every Middle Easterner regards Israel as little more than a foreign colony.

Anti-Shi'ism provides the Saudis with a temporary respite. After Iran's revolution, the Saudis rose to the occasion and helped bankroll Iraq's Saddam Hussein when his war against Iran began to falter. Besides trying to drown Iran in blood, and despite Iran's untold military and civilian

casualties and thousands of victims of chemical weapons from the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, the Saudis figure that a nice Sunni-Shi'a conflict may now pay better dividends.

It might even induce Israel to make a few minor concessions to the weak Palestinians and settle the whole "irritating" problem of Palestine. Miscalculating, the Saudis remain dogged in their "secret" alliance with Israel.

But the European Union too had been making its calculations, given the dimming prospects of an Israeli-Palestinian peace after several initiatives by Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama turned into foreign-policy fiascos. With Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's ongoing feud with Obama, the West seems to have no idea how to deal with Israel's unending subjugation of the Palestinians.

But it is the United States that faces the starkest of choices. One is to support the Saudi-Israeli rampage across the Middle East and risk the region's social and political collapse as well as a final military conflagration. Or, beat a hasty retreat and let the people of Iran find their natural, rightful place in a part of the world they have inhabited continuously for at least 5,000 years, before the Western colonialism and its aftermath blew everything apart.

Sadly, the Western plan on paper has been, yesterday as it is today, to carve the Middle East up into ethno-religious enclaves. The only conceivable reasoning for this is the forlorn hope that that it will somehow confer at least short-term "legitimacy" on the idea of a "Jewish State," as Israel leaders stridently demand.

King Salman needs the Sunni-Shia conflict more than ever, too, just to perpetuate the waning rule of his dynasty and the aberrant social conditions of his subjects. Saudi Arabia's Wahhabism has rotted away society to the core, just as it has everywhere else it has taken root.

Dr. In'am al-Rabu'i, the president of children's studies at the Armed Forces Hospital in Jeddah, warns that the country suffers from widespread sexual ailments. This has been known for some time. But a recent study has shown that a whopping 23 percent of all Saudi children have been raped at least once, mostly within families.

This is a country whose vitality has been sapped, yet it sits atop an ocean of oil. That the world economy depends on this oil should not give terrorism carte blanche.

One is hard-pressed to see how the West could be allies at all with a government which couldn't be bothered to hide its terrorist connections anymore. It is patently wrong to ascribe the Saudi present animosities toward Iran to "ancient religious disputes," much less throw the blame equally on all parties and lay back to watch the fireworks.