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## The Arms of King Abdullah

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Congress was recently notified by the US administration that it would be selling weapons to Saudi Arabia in one of the largest arms sales in history. The \$60 billion deal includes advanced military aircraft, new helicopters, and other weapons such as missiles and bombs.



Aside from the fact that the costs of US weapons development are socialized while the profits are privatized, this seems like we're just selling weapons to another country. It doesn't really seem like a big deal, considering how much foreign aid we usually provide to everyone so they can fight against each other; but this arms deal has much more to do with foreign policy than meets the eye.

You see, the connections between Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United States make up the Bermuda Triangle of foreign policy. This twisted three way is deeply confusing for most, and truly disturbing to think about for many others.

We have to look a bit back in history in order to understand the complexity of this relationship.

The Iran-Iraq War is a good place to start. When Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, the United States remained officially neutral while covertly assisting the Iraqi Army. As Iran started to succeed against the Iraqi invaders, the United States increased its support for Iraq, most likely because the United States was still a bit touchy about the events one year earlier, when Iran overthrew the dictator that the CIA had placed in power.

Iraq realized in 1988 that it couldn't pay back its heavy debts to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Saddam Hussein didn't believe Iraq had to pay back its debts to Saudi Arabia because the Saudis had only supported Iraq in the war due to fear that the new Iran would influence the Saudis' Shi'a minority, who controlled the majority of oil fields. No agreement could be found, and Iraq proceeded to invade Kuwait two years later. This marks the beginning the Gulf War and the US government's close relationship with Saudi Arabia.

Once the Iraqi Army was in Kuwait, its proximity was close enough to strike the Saudi oil fields, the fact of which was worsened by Hussein's verbal — and extremely hypocritical — attacks on the US-supported Saudi state. Eventually the US military sent 543,000 troops into Saudi Arabia in order to protect it.

That is how much we have supported Saudi Arabia; and, due to that support, they've allowed us to keep around 5,000 troops in their country since 1992, a number that rose to nearly 10,000 during the recent conflict with Iraq. Saudi Arabia has become our puppet, and this leads directly to our relationship with Iran.

Iran has already experienced what it's like to deal with a puppet. The Shah brutalized that country to an extent beyond imagination. It's no wonder why Iranians just want to be left the hell alone.

I'll be the first to admit that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad says some crazy things from time to time, but, if the Iranian citizens don't like him, it's their own problem to deal with, not ours, and they surely are capable of dealing with it. They toppled a previous oppressive regime backed up by an even bigger foreign military. If you don't see the reflection of our own country's founders in that mix, you're not paying attention.

Now, whether or not Iran's nuclear program poses a threat to the United States doesn't really matter, because, as we've seen throughout the past decade, preemptive wars do not end well; and the only reason Iran would ever attack us is if we were to intervene even further in its affairs.

I mean, the United States continually enforces sanctions against the country, installs military bases surrounding its borders, and supports much more oppressive regimes; and we continue to ask why the Iranians are scared? They have as much right to defend themselves from us as we do from them. Of course, when the US government doesn't get its way, it has to call in the United Nations.

The most recent of the sanctions against Iran, passed earlier this year, have crippled Iran's economy in the name of hurting Iran's government. The United Nations is arrogant for thinking that sanctions hurt governments and not citizens. It is incredibly easier to be poor in the United States, where the economy is at least semifree, as opposed to in a country where imports are impeded by illegal blockades, and thus costs are raised.

So, in essence, the US government likes the Saudis because they allow us to be in their country, and it doesn't like the Iranians because they don't want us to be in their country.

But we have to make sure to understand the importance of the depths of these relationships, or else the debate ends up focusing on some kind of nonexistent difference in mentality between Saudis, Iranians, and Americans that we can somehow fix overnight.

We always need to see things from various perspectives. How would we feel if Iran were to set up multiple military bases in Mexico, Canada, and Cuba? The answer is that we'd feel threatened.

A big factor in the equation is that Mecca and Medina, the two holiest Islamic cities, are in Saudi Arabia, where our troops were stationed, which is one of the main reasons for the attacks on September 11th.

It is true that we took out most of our troops from the area in 2003 in order to ease tensions caused by our foreign interferences; but for the United States to supply Saudi Arabia with a massive arsenal near the holy Islamic cities is a disastrous idea. With Iran's recent insurances on being a sovereign nation, our sale to Saudi Arabia is our government's way of telling Iran, "We're not there, but we are."

This arms deal is aggressive and demeaning; and it in no way protects the interests of the United States. Until our military is completely out of the Arabian Peninsula, we cannot expect to make any peace with foreign nations.