

# Iran and Saudi Arabia's "Deep State" Factions Are Striking Back

By [Andrew Korybko](#)

Global Research, August 28, 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#)

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above

*Rival Great Powers Iran and Saudi Arabia are both experiencing different degrees of pushback from certain "deep state" factions in their permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies, with this dynamic being responsible for several of the latest breaking news developments in the region.*

Four breaking news developments almost simultaneously emerged from the Persian Gulf region recently, and they're all connected in one way or another to the "deep state" struggles that Iran and Saudi Arabia are presently undergoing. The first is that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's (MBS) plan to partially privatize the Aramco oil giant was [indefinitely delayed](#) after the King's intervention, which was shortly thereafter followed by Iran's Finance Minister being [impeached](#). Then, on Monday, Iran [claimed full control](#) over the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz, which in turn prompted Saudi Arabia to [predict](#) that the UNSC would authorize military intervention against the Islamic Republic if it prevented transit through these waterways.

## Domestic Power Plays

Although seemingly disconnected to the casual observer, the common denominator between everything that just unfolded is that competing "deep state" factions in each of the two rivals' permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies are vying for control of their respective state.

The rapidly redeveloping rift between Iran's "principalists" and "reformers" (regarded in the Western Mainstream Media as "conservatives/hardliners" and "moderates", respectively) isn't a surprise to anyone who follows the country's domestic political scene, but the impeachment of "reformist" President Rouhani's Finance Minister proves that the "principalists" are on the ascendency and unafraid of making bold power plays in parliament. Their goal is manifold but mostly deals with "punishing" Rouhani's "reformers" for their unsuccessful rapprochement with the US and consequently coercing them into implementing the "principalists'" domestic and foreign policies. Given the [increasing bouts of local unrest](#) caused by the deteriorating economic situation in the country, it's likely that Rouhani will sooner or later have to ironically "reform" his "moderate" policies and become more "conservative".

As for Saudi Arabia, MBS' structurally ["revolutionary"](#) policies of progressively mitigating the influence of Wahhabism on his society in parallel with carrying out his own "deep state" coup against many of his own extended family members under an "anti-corruption" guise

has earned him plenty of enemies, some of whom may have tried to overthrow or even assassinate him during a [mysterious event](#) in late-April that led to the Crown Prince's [prolonged absence](#) from public life. It was likely during this time that his enemies took advantage of his father's reported dementia to brainwash him into sabotaging Aramco's planned partial privatization. Not only would this ruin MBS' ambitious Vision 2030 strategy of socio-economic reform, but it would also stop their corrupt practices revealed to the public as part of the privatization process and therefore prevent even more of them from being purged by the Crown Prince on those grounds.

Basically, manipulating the King amounted to an act of temporary self-preservation for MBS' "deep state" royalist foes that nevertheless undermines the country's grand strategic interests, hence why it was wildly cheered on by the Kingdom's Iranian-friendly Alt-Media foes.

### International Drama

Sensing Saudi weakness and also eager to signal to their domestic audience that they're calling the shots at home after successfully impeaching Rouhani's Finance Minister, the "principalists" "deep state" representatives in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) stunningly declared that they now have full control over the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. This immediately produced a flurry of reactions across the world ranging from celebrations to condemnations, though most people neglected to realize that Tehran is unlikely to trigger a world war at this time and is simply flexing its muscles for the aforementioned symbolic reasons.

It's important in the context of domestic Iranian politics for the "principalists" to show their people that they're taking a strong stand against America in advance of the anticipated worsening of economic conditions at home. This helps to galvanize support for the country's governing system during these trying times, ensuring that public opposition responsibly refrains from challenging it and instead remains safely in the realm of partisan politics. So long as the state occasionally carries out dramatic gestures of resistance against the US, then it won't lose much legitimacy in the eyes of the people like Washington intends to happen [throughout the course](#) of the [presentHybrid War](#).

Concerning Saudi Arabia, it skillfully (though hypocritically) resorted to speaking about international law in response to Iran's recent military declaration, which allows the Kingdom to present itself in a better light by contrast. If Iran were to take military action to halt the transit of US naval vessels and other countries' oil tankers through the region, then it would veritably be in violation of international law, which is another reason why this is all probably just one big virtue signaling show for the previously described reasons. In any case, the perception of an external Iranian threat strengthens "deep state" solidarity in Saudi Arabia, so Tehran's tactics might actually be counterproductive.

Still, it can't be disregarded that the Saudi "deep state" is indeed divided at this very moment between MBS' loyalists who helped him almost flawlessly carry out his "anti-corruption" de-facto coup late last year and those who are opposed to the fast-moving and unprecedented full-spectrum changes that he's presided over. The unexpected success of the Crown Prince's enemies in convincing the King to go against one of the key pillars of his son's Vision 2030 strategy for procuring the funds necessary to rapidly modernize the Kingdom speaks to their rising influence in the court, but it also suggests that MBS and his "deep state" backers now have an urgent reason to seek the King's "resignation" and carry

out a “regime change” before a lower-level one is undertaken against them.

### Will One De-Facto Coup Lead To Another?

The current trajectory of Iranian “deep state” developments is that the “principalists” will succeed in regaining full de-facto control over the state following the brief and strategically unsuccessful period of “reformist” rule that only delivered high and ultimately failed hopes to the country’s masses. The enormous youth population that was responsible for Rouhani’s electoral success twice in a row was predisposed by typical generational factors to favor the “reformists” over the “principalists”, though some of them might finally be coming around to realizing the fallacy of their ways after the military-intelligence faction of the “deep state” has now been vindicated for its cautionary approach towards the US. There will expectedly be some who will object to the most likely outcome of a newly emboldened “principalist” state operating behind a “reformist” face, though they’ll probably remain in the minority because most of Rouhani’s supporters might reconcile themselves with the fact that he had to “reform” his original policies due to the latest domestic and international circumstances, while his opponents will be satisfied that their faction is practically back in power.

Iran’s “deep state” transition (or “de-facto coup”, if one wants to take a cynical perspective towards this process) will more than likely be peaceful, which is more than can be said for Saudi Arabia’s. MBS and the powerful members of his country’s military-intelligence “deep state” faction that are supporting him won’t allow their “[revolutionary](#)” to be sidelined by the royalist-Wahhabi alliance (which is in essence the traditional basis of the Saudi state, especially after 1979) up to the point of possibly even being unseated from his position as Crown Prince just like his predecessor was. The proverbial writing is on the wall and both factions know it, which is why one or the other might make a dramatic move sometime in the future, which could possibly be triggered by the success of Iran’s “principalists” faction across the Gulf. Decontextualized, misportrayed, and over-amplified infowar narratives pertaining to this development – inadvertently assisted by some of Iran’s own statements such as those regarding the Gulf and Strait of Hormuz – could even be used by MBS to “justify” taking the first step.

### Concluding Thoughts

The Iranian and Saudi “deep states” have indeed acted against their public faces guiding their countries’ affairs, and each has relatively succeeded in what they set out to do. The “principalists” have proven that they can not only twist the “reformists’” arm on the domestic front, but also showed their people that they’re in total control of Iran’s international and military affairs after their latest declaration concerning the Gulf and Strait of Hormuz. Regarding Riyadh, the royal intrigue in the Saudi capital saw MBS’ foes temporarily offset one of the main policies of his and his “deep state” backers’ Vision 2030 socio-economic reform project, which works out to their temporary self-interest though at the obvious expense of long-term national ones. Whereas Iran’s “deep state” transition (“de-facto coup”) will probably be peaceful and has already pretty much succeeded, Saudi Arabia’s is still uncertain and might even lead to violence.

Another factor to be considered is that the US now has a pressing interest in supporting MBS, unlike last year when it was thought to have been cultivating some of his “deep state” enemies in order to influence him to scale back his fast-moving rapprochements with America’s [Russian](#) and [Chinese](#) multipolar rivals. Nowadays, however, the US would rather that MBS remain in power and eventually become King because the partial privatization of

Aramco would preserve the complex economic interdependency between the US and Saudi Arabia in the post-oil era and contribute to countering rising Russian and Chinese influence in the Kingdom. The US also needs a strong Saudi Arabia as its “[Lead From Behind](#)” partner against Iran, especially a “principalist”-led one like it’s basically turning into nowadays, and MBS is its best bet for achieving this so long as they can retain a comfortable amount of influence over his country through strategic Vision 2030 investments.

All told, the primary takeaway is that the latest breaking news developments in the Gulf are driven by the “deep state” struggles within Iran and Saudi Arabia as each country’s aspirational power faction tries to unseat the one that’s already in charge of the state, be it formally or informally. The process underway in Iran was catalyzed by the external pressure being put on the country by the US and is intended (key word) by its participants to be to the benefit of its national interests, though the one in Saudi Arabia is entirely caused by domestic circumstances and is counter to the country’s national interests. The US is against both progressively unfolding “deep state coups” for different but interrelated reasons because the success of the one in Iran might make America’s chief regional adversary even stronger while the victory of MBS’ royalist-Wahhabi foes in Saudi Arabia would weaken the US’ main regional partner.

\*

*This article was originally published on [Eurasia Future](#).*

*Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China’s One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.*

The original source of this article is Global Research  
Copyright © [Andrew Korybko](#), Global Research, 2018

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Andrew Korybko](#)

#### About the author:

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China’s One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants

permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)