

Saudi Arabia and the Doctrine of Global Islamist Terror

By [Adeyinka Makinde](#)

Global Research, June 06, 2017

[Adeyinka Makinde](#) 3 June 2017

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

Theme: [History](#), [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War](#)
[Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

Much has been remarked about a picture taken by United States President Donald Trump on his recent visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Alongside Trump, are the monarch of the Saudi state, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and the Egyptian president, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. All three men were captured placing their hands on a luminescent sphere. In the dimmed surroundings, the contrast between the set of glistening supraorbital ridges and pallid glow of fleshy cheeks on the one hand and the darkened, seemingly sunken eye sockets on the other produced an effect on each man's countenance that was both striking and startling.

If it reminded some of a pagan rite in which the participants were attempting to summon the forces of darkness, such an analogy would not be misplaced for it is an image which evokes the nature of the unholy alliance between the United States and the kingdom. Further, the fact that the event was held at an establishment which the Saudis name the 'Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology' also captures the diabolical cynicism of the Saudi state whose Wahhabi ideology is the underpinning factor of the phenomenon of global jihadism. This puritan mutation of Islam serves as the inspiration for a network of extremist Sunni terror militias that includes al-Qaeda, the so-called Islamic State, Jabhat al-Nusra and Boko Haram.

The age-long rivalries and ancient hatreds which inform Saudi foreign policy; namely those related to regimes reflecting secular nationalist and pan-Arabist thinking as well as to Persian-majority Iran, the bastion of Shiadom, have produced a situation in which Saudi Arabian geo-political objectives coalesce with those of the United States and Israel. This has meant that the Saudis have been involved in both covert and overt efforts aimed at destabilisation and balkanisation in the Middle East and North African area and beyond; a central tactic that has involved the use of Wahhabist terror groups.



Former President of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser (Source: britannica.com)

The rulers of Saudi Arabia, the oil rich kingdom situated on the Arabian peninsula, have for long seen themselves as being far more than the custodians of the holy relics of Islam. They have sought to be the undisputed leaders of the Arab and Muslim world; in the past battling with the secular, pan-Arab philosophy espoused by Gamal Abdel Nasser for the heart and soul of the Arab world, and, in more recent times, contending with Shi'ite Iran for regional influence.

However, this global scale reach for power and influence over a period of many decades has resulted in a state of affairs in regard to which the following inexorable conclusion cannot be avoided: that Saudi Arabia bears the greatest responsibility for the spread of militant Islamic ideology and remains the largest sponsor of Islamist terror groups.

A leaked email written by Hillary Clinton in January 2016 included an excerpt from a private speech she had made in 2013 in which she acknowledged that

“the Saudis have exported more extreme ideology than any other place on earth over the course of the last 30 years.”

And a classified 2009 cable signed by Clinton while serving as US Secretary of State admitted that

“Donors in Saudi Arabia constitute the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide.”

In July of 2013, the European Parliament identified Wahhabism, the governing doctrine of Saudi Arabia, to be the main source of global terrorism.

The Wahhabist strain of Islamic theology lies at the heart of the creation of the Saudi state. Based on a demand that Muslims return to the pure and austere faith practiced by Prophet Muhammad and his early companions in Medina, Wahhabist-thinking rejected practices such as consuming tobacco, wearing silk clothes, the adorning of gold jewelry by men, and

dancing to music. It forbade the building of gravestones and mausoleums or other edifices or practices which were viewed as encouraging idol and ancestor-worship; all of which detracted from complete subservience to God. It also considered the culture and philosophy accumulated by a thousand years of Muslim civilization to be heretical. This is known in Islamic parlance as Bid'ah.

The original followers of Ibn Abdel Wahhab were Bedouin folk who felt pride in an uncomplicated puritan mode of living which stood in satisfying contrast, as they saw it, to the decadent influences which permeated the practice of Islam among the more 'sophisticated' city dwellers in places such as Mecca and Basra. It was also a reaction against the opulent lifestyles of the Egyptian and Ottoman nobility.

The Wahhabist gospel preached a merciless creed of proselytizing via the sword. The takfiri doctrine designated as infidels not only those who were non-Muslim, but also Muslim adherents to the Shia and Sufi sects, and even Sunnis who did not fulfill to the letter, Wahhab's teachings. Those who did not adhere to his teachings effectively forfeited their right to their lives and to their property. He wrote the following:

Those who would not conform to this view should be killed, their wives and daughters violated, and their possessions confiscated.

The relationship between the Sauds, a Bedouin clan, and Wahhabism go back to their antecedent Muhammad al Saud, a chieftain from the Nedj, a highland area of central Arabia. Al Saud combined his military prowess with the fervour engendered by Wahhabist thinking to create what is often referred to as the first Saudi state. Among his conquests were Mecca and Medina. The Shi'ite city of Karbala was also invaded and desecrated.

The license given to pillage outlying communities was an aspect of the Wahhabi doctrine which wedded with Bedouin culture. Saud showed no mercy as he went on to establish what came to be known as the Emirate of Diriyah until his defeat in 1818 by an Egyptian Expeditionary force sent by the Ottoman rulers who took him to Istanbul where he was beheaded in front of St. Sophia. His severed head was thrown into the Bosphorus.

However, the early part of the 20th century saw the beginning of the rise of another Saudi state under a young chief of the Saud clan named Abdelaziz. Utilising the services of a Bedouin cadre of pastoralised warriors known as the Ikhwan, Saud began a series of conquests over a period of several decades which covered much of the Arabian peninsula. The survivors of Ikhwan conquest were subjected to a political and social regime which strictly enforced the tenets of Wahhabism. Saudi expansion was limited largely by the colonial presence of the British who aided Abdelaziz in destroying the Ikhwan, elements of whom rebelled against what they saw as Abdelaziz's compromises with European infidels and the encroaching modern world fuelled by the discovery oil and its attendant wealth.



Palmyra, an ancient heritage site liberated from ISIS (Source: Mikhail Voskresensky / Sputnik)

That is the history through which one can comprehend the motivation of groups such as Islamic State in destroying Roman architecture in Palmyra and of Boko Haram putting whole communities to death. Both groups have outraged the world with their treatment of females who have been subjected to concubinage and forced marriages; acts which amount to mass rape. Hostility to modern culture and its underpinning ideas are reflected in the name Boko Haram, a faux amis which stands for “Western education is a sin”. It was given by Hausa-speaking residents of the area of north-eastern Nigeria from where the group originated.

But how did the Wahhabist creed expand beyond the Arabian peninsula after the fall of the Ikhwan and the halt of the military advances of the clan of al Saud?

There are arguably two pivotal events which shaped the beginnings of what we now understand to be global jihadism. One concerns an anti-House of Saud insurrection in 1979, which is known as the ‘Siege of Mecca’. It was led by a descendant of a prominent member of the Ikhwan. The other is the role played by Saudi Arabia as part of the anti-Soviet alliance in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

On November 20th 1979, the first day of a new Muslim century, hundreds of gunmen led by a preacher by the name of Juhaymon al-Otaybi seized control of the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Mecca. Otaybi declared that the Mahdi or “redeemer of Islam” had arrived in the form of one Mohammed Abdullah al-Qahtani.

Otaybi and his group of insurgents had the objective of overthrowing the House of Saud on the grounds that the rulers of the Saudi state had compromised the strict tenets of the Wahhabi creed which had been central to the formation of the country. They called for the expulsion of Westerners, the abolition of television and the ending of education for women. The siege lasted for two weeks. After obtaining the blessing of Wahhabi clerics, the Saudis used a detachment of French special forces to enter the Grand Mosque and flush out the rebels.

But it all came at a price. Following consultations with the class of influential fundamentalist clerics, many of whom agreed with the grievances of the rebels, the Saudis set about ‘correcting’ those areas where ‘liberalisation’ had strayed beyond acceptable limits

including the media and the school curriculum. The clerics also extracted from the Saudis a commitment to pumping money into the coffers of Sunni missionary organisations with the objective of spreading the Wahhabist doctrine in Islamic universities and madrassas around the Muslim world. It is a policy which became institutionalised and continues to this day.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, occurring like the siege of Mecca in 1979, was the second critical event. The outrage felt by the Muslim world included the declaration of a fatwa by Abdelaziz Bin Baz, who later became the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia. The rulers of Saudi Arabia then became involved with 'Operation Cyclone', one of the longest and most expensive covert operations undertaken by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Masterminded by Zbigniew Brzezinski, the US National Security Advisor during the administration of President Jimmy Carter, the Saudis provided a large amount of funding for the local Mujahideen as well as the bands of non-Afghan jihadis who flocked in from parts of the Muslim world. Among the multi-ethnic force of migrant warriors, the so-called 'Afghan Arabs', was a young, wealthy Saudi Arabian named Osama bin Laden.



1977. President Jimmy Carter with National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski (Source: history.state.gov)

It is from this endeavour overseen by the Americans and heavily funded by the Saudis that the rise of al Qaeda and global jihadism can be traced. The template of Operation Cyclone would be used by the Americans with the aid of the Saudis in future conflicts ranging from the one in Bosnia and Kosovo to the present insurrection in Syria. While funding has come from state and private sources among the Gulf states including Qatar, a country with which the Saudis have a rivalry over dominance in the Sunni world, it is safe to assume that the bulk of financing has come from Saudi sources.

A well-worn method of funnelling money and weapons to jihadist causes is through a network of Saudi-sponsored 'charities'. It is estimated that the Saudis funded the Bosnian Mujahideen to the tune of approximately \$150 million from both state and private sources. The Saudi government was reputed to be the largest donor to the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA), which served as a conduit for both finance and arms for the Mujahideen, an

arrangement which broke an arms embargo.

Saudi funding for militant Islamist groups continued into the era of the so-called war on terror commenced after the September 11 attacks on American soil by what were claimed to be al-Qaeda cells. Most of the alleged 19 hijackers were identified as Saudi citizens although confusion over the identity of a number of them persists until this day.

While the United States claimed that it would wage war against Sunni Islamist groups of the sort that are claimed to have carried out the terror attacks in the name of al-Qaeda, this has not prevented it from utilizing such groups in attempting to overthrow secular Arab governments who have stood in opposition to American policy. This has invariably been pursued with the help of Saudi Arabia.

The administration of President George Bush recalibrated its policy in providing support to Sunni militant groups in achieving the end of overthrowing the Alawite-dominated government of Syria, with the Saudis playing a key role. Writing about this 're-direction' in the March 2007 edition of the New Yorker magazine, Seymour Hersh gave the following explanation of how Washington would put pressure on Hezbollah through the use of militant Lebanese Sunni groups:

In Lebanon, the Administration has cooperated with Saudi Arabia's government, which is Sunni, in clandestine operations that are intended to weaken Hezbollah, the Shi'ite organisation that is backed by Iran. The US has also taken part in clandestine operations aimed at Iran and its ally Syria. A by-product of these activities has been the bolstering of Sunni extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam and are hostile to America and sympathetic to al-Qaeda.

Four years later, this strategy would be taken to another level on Syrian soil under cover of the so-called 'Arab Spring'. The introduction of armed jihadist mercenaries to act in concert with homegrown anti-Assad militias, the majority of which have a jihadist agenda, has produced an insurgency which has caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands and left millions internally and externally displaced.

The Saudis have continued to feature in exposes relating to the funding of these rebels. For instance, the British Daily Telegraph edition of March 8th 2013 reported an airlift of arms through Zagreb destined for Syrian rebels. According to the report,

"the shipments were allegedly paid for by Saudi Arabia at the bidding of the United States, with assistance on supplying the weapons organised through Turkey and Jordan, Syria's neighbours."



Saudi Arabia buys Yugoslavian guns for the Syrian rebels, according to NYT's sources.
(Source: worldbulletin.net)

An earlier report in the New York Times of 25 February 2013 headlined "Saudis Step Up Help for Rebels in Syria With Croatian Arms" was more definitive about Saudi involvement:

Saudi Arabia has financed a large purchase of infantry weapons from Croatia and quietly funneled them to antigovernment fighters in Syria in a drive to break the bloody stalemate that has allowed President Bashar al-Assad to cling to power, according to American and Western officials familiar with the purchases.

This was not an isolated episode. In addition to the aforementioned leaked emails of Hillary Clinton, in another communication dated in 2014, Clinton cited Western intelligence sources as asserting that United States allies Saudi Arabia and Qatar supported ISIS. She wrote:

We need to use our diplomatic and more traditional intelligence assets to bring pressure on the governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which are providing clandestine financial and logistical support to ISIL and other radical Sunni groups in the region

But Clinton is not the only senior American political figure to have alluded to Saudi financing of the terror militias in Syria. Referring to “our allies in the region” in regard to which he specifically mentioned “the Saudis”, the then serving US Vice President Joe Biden, in a speech at the John Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in October 2014, revealed the following:

They were so determined to take down Assad and essentially have a proxy Sunni-Shia war. What did they do? They poured hundreds of millions dollars and thousands of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad. Except that the people who were being supplied were al-Nusra and al-Qaeda and the extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world

The Saudis have also not been averse to directing the machineries of internal control to serve as instruments of state terror as relates to the actions taken against Shia dissenters in Qatif, a governorate within the largely Shia eastern province. Its military have also undertaken brutal interventions in neighbouring countries. It invaded Shia-majority Bahrain in 2011 to suppress demonstrations by those opposed to the rule of the Sunni al-Khalifa family.

The actions of the Saudi military in its current intervention in Yemen -albeit as part of a coalition of Arab and African states- is not premised as an operation of benevolent peacekeeping. While fighting against the Shia Houthi rebels, who Saudi Arabia claim - without providing evidence- are being aided by Iran, the Saudi military has implemented a campaign of terror directed at the civilian population. This has included airstrikes on residential complexes and market places as well as the deliberate destruction of infrastructure: health centres, farms and agricultural industry.

These all amount to war crimes. The Saudis are signatories to the additional protocol of the Geneva Conventions of August 1949 which provides the following:

It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population such as foodstuffs, crops, livestock...for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population...whatever the motive...

Saudi actions have led to what a top United Nations relief official described as a “humanitarian catastrophe”. A United Nations News Service report in July 2015 noted that eighty percent of the total Yemeni population of 26 million were in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. The threat of long-term famine is a real one.

It is important to note that the Saudi role in fomenting terrorism by waging proxy wars or interventionist wars of the sort that Yemen is, has continually been facilitated by Western powers, most notably Britain and the United States. British arms supplies and British military advisers are key components in this war. Both the CIA and MI6 were central in facilitating the transaction involving the previously mentioned airlift of arms from Zagreb to Syrian rebels in their efforts to overthrow Assad; an endeavour which according to Roland Dumas, a former French foreign minister was planned years in advance, with key input by Britain.

Saudi collusion with Nato powers fits into the historical context of Western use of militant Islam in the furtherance of geo-political objectives. Both the United States and Britain have had an enduring relationship with extremist Islamist movements and militias including the Egyptian-originated Muslim Brotherhood. For the Americans, this goes back to at least the time of the Eisenhower administration in the 1950s while Britain’s relations with the Brotherhood go further back in time to the period following its creation in the late 1920s.

Britain’s specific relationship with the ruling House of Saud has been a long-lasting one. In the early part of the 20th century, the resurgent Saudi emirate was used by the British as a means of weakening Ottoman power in the Arabian Peninsula despite Winston Churchill’s misgivings about Ibn Saud’s followers being “bloodthirsty” and “intolerant”. The logic that Saudi Arabia is a worthy ally because of its oil wealth and geo-strategic position is one which underpins its relations with Britain.

This also applies to the United States. The assessment by British policymakers in 1947 of Saudi oil as “a vital prize for any power interested in world influence or domination” captures the essence of America’s ties with the Saudi kingdom.

The relationship between both nations, one self-avowedly democratic and republican and the other an absolute monarchy, steeped in medieval-era feudalism, is one which is riddled with contradiction and hypocrisy.

At its heart is the supply of Saudi oil which President Franklin Roosevelt explained would be the determining factor in shaping the alliance. It is one which is predicated on a series of Faustian-like bargains. In 1971, with the aim of propping up the faltering dollar after taking the United States off the gold standard, President Richard Nixon negotiated a deal whereby the United States would guarantee to militarily protect the Saudis in return for the Saudis guaranteeing the sale of the oil they produce in US dollars. The aim of this pact is to assure the survivability of the US dollar as the world’s dominant reserve currency.

The relationship has evolved to encompass collusion in the arming and training of jihadi militias pursuant to each country’s hegemonic objectives: for the Americans global economic and military dominance and for the Saudis, dominance in the Arab and Muslim world.

The question of terrorism has at various junctures served to complicate Saudi relations with both America and Britain. For instance, in 2016, the Saudis threatened to dump billions of United States assets in retribution if a bill by American lawmakers holding Saudi Arabia

responsible for the September 11th terror attacks was passed. It stemmed from the revelation that 28 pages had been redacted from a report on the atrocity.

In the case of Britain, a long-term supplier of arms and who like the Americans have played a key part in training the National Guard, the issue arose when the Saudis threatened to withdraw from security cooperation with British intelligence agencies over a decision by the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) to commence an investigation into allegations of bribery involving members of the Saudi royal family and government officials in an arms deal between BAE Systems and the Saudi government.

After pressure from the highest levels of the government of Tony Blair, the investigation was discontinued. A subsequent judicial review by the highest court in Britain accepted the argument by the government that the threat issued by the Saudis, which the British government claimed would have led to an increased threat of terrorism in Britain was a relevant consideration to be taken into account by the head of the SFO in making the decision to abort the investigation.

Court papers revealed that the rulers of Saudi Arabia had threatened to make it easier to attack London unless the inquiry was stopped. Secret files described how investigators were told that Britain would be faced with “another 7/7” and the loss of “British lives on British streets” if the investigation was not discontinued. The threats to withhold information related to potential suicide bombers and terrorists were claimed to have been made by Prince Bandar, when head of the Saudi National Security Council, on a visit to London in December of 2006.



Tony Blair with Saudi King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (Source: express.co.uk)

The irony was that Tony Blair, to whom Bandar must have voiced such threats, had five years earlier described Saudi Arabia as “a good friend in the international coalition against terrorism”.

This hypocritical disconnect from reality has for long typified the Western relationship with the Saudis. Blair’s predecessor, Margaret Thatcher once claimed that the Saudis “never used arms irresponsibly”; a statement which jars today given the use of British-supplied arms by the Saudi military in the present conflict in Yemen. Thatcher’s 1981 declaration that

“the hearts of the free world” were with the Afghan Mujahideen must also rankle those aware of the mutation of several of its component parts into al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

The frequent claims by contemporary British and American political and military leaders that Iran is the “the world’s biggest sponsor of terrorism” does not stand to scrutiny. All the major acts of terror carried out in the West in the name of Islam have emanated from Sunni and not Shia militants. It is a bias which extends to criticisms leveled at Iran’s electoral process while Western politicians say little or nothing about the lack of democratic institutions in Saudi society.

Saudi Arabia’s quest for dominance in the Muslim and Arab world is not based on spreading enlightened values. There are no features in its society which would for instance encourage movements designed to develop civil society or the intellectual critique of episodes in Muslim and Arab history as pertain to the issues of slavery and genocide. Its human rights failings are well documented and the problems of discrimination in relation to the ceiling faced by female, Shia and black Saudi citizens remain largely unaddressed.

It is clear that the “shared interests and values” claimed by Donald Trump on his recent visit to Saudi Arabia to be at the basis of the partnership between the Americans and the Saudis are not predicated on what could be termed universal moral and ethical standards of behaviour. It is a partnership which is primarily based on the determined acquisition of power and domination which has been guided by an ends justifies the means ethos.

This in the final analysis is the reason why Saudi Arabia, with the complicity of its Western backers, will not escape history’s judgement as the greatest purveyor of fundamentalist-based Islamic terror.

Adeyinka Makinde is a London-based writer. He can be followed on Twitter @AdeyinkaMakinde.

Featured image: Adeyinka Makinde

The original source of this article is [Adeyinka Makinde](#)
Copyright © [Adeyinka Makinde](#), [Adeyinka Makinde](#), 2017

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

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Adeyinka Makinde](#)

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
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