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Editorial:

Biden Empowers America's Enemies

By Arthur Tane
TCMER Executive Director



Is America electing a very corrupt career politicians with ongoing links to Beijing and Moscow? (Photo by Dailywire)

That Joe Biden could very soon be President-elect of the United States, with the far more radical Kamala Harris ready in the wings when dotty old Joe is 25th-Amendmented off the national stage, is an indication that the massive forces arrayed against President Trump were just too powerful for American patriots to defeat.

President Biden would also return the U.S. to the self-defeating accords that impinge upon American sovereignty and weaken our nation in the face of international foes and competitors, such as the Paris Climate Accord. His possible victory would herald the restoration of the disastrous Iran nuclear deal, which emboldened and empowered the Islamic Republic of Iran to develop nuclear weapons at home and engage in jihad adventurism abroad.

Biden's victory would, of course, also be a victory for The Squad and their Green New Deal, which the candidate repudiated while advertising on his website; it would be a victory for the Muslim Brotherhood-linked groups that Biden repeatedly signalled he would empower. It would be a victory for the Antifa and BLM goons who have made Portland unliveable and rioted in other cities.

A Biden/Harris presidency would be a discarding of Trump's America-First foreign policy and a return to the status quo ante of internationalism, interventionism, enabling of jihad, and managed decline.

On Iran

Early in his campaign Biden said he would rejoin the Iran nuclear deal if Iran starts complying with the pact, a move that advisers say will require close work with allies and a near immediate start of new negotiations.

"If Tehran returns to compliance with the deal, I would re-join the agreement and work with our allies to strengthen and extend it, while more effectively pushing back against Iran's other destabilizing activities," Biden said during a foreign policy speech in 2019.

This disastrous deal only paved the way for Iran to get nuclear weapons, as it allowed for the mullahs to inspect their own nuclear sites under some circumstances, and contained no restrictions at all after a ten-year period. So the U.S. rejoining the deal would be a massive boost for the Islamic Republic.

On Yemen

In a stark contrast to the Trump administration, Biden would end support for the Saudi Arabia-led intervention in Yemen, which many in Congress oppose because of reports of ongoing and serious human rights violations. There has been a major push from the progressive arm of the Democratic Party for Biden to adopt this policy.

This would aid Iran's proxy war against the Saudis, waged in Yemen by means of the Shi'ite Houthis, and aid the Islamic Republic's overall goal of expanding its influence in the Middle East and worldwide.

On Israel and the Palestinians

Biden aides signal some shifts from Trump's approach. The President has made some controversial moves to favor Israel — including moving the US embassy to Jerusalem and declaring the city to be Israel's capital, but these steps will be hard to reverse.

Biden has said he will not move the US embassy back to Tel Aviv, but that he will restore engagement with Palestinians that Trump has cut off, will reopen the US consulate in East Jerusalem that was meant to serve the Palestinian population, restore assistance to Palestinians and the United Nations agency that supports them and help reopen the Palestinian Liberation Organization mission in the US, which was shut down by Trump.

In other words, it will be back to Obama's coddling of the Palestinian leadership and enabling of their jihad.

A Biden victory would also be a victory for political corruption, as the massive evidence that Joe and Hunter Biden sold access to the U.S. government to foreign powers will not be investigated, and will likely resume. And the nationwide evidence that fraud propelled their man into the White House?

After a four-year coffee break, the Biden victory would mean that it's time to get back on our heads. It would signal a return to the failed policies of the past: high taxes, crushing regulations, and the managed decline of the American economy as American jobs and industries are steadily outsourced to Joe's pals in China and to other countries where workers are willing or forced to work more cheaply. It would mean a return to open-borders internationalism.

Biden's victory would mean, in short, the victory of the globalist elites who control the social media giants, the establishment media, the educational system, the entertainment industry, and pretty much everything else. After a severe challenge from Trump and his America-First supporters, the elites will have reasserted their hegemony, and they would resume total control while being in no mood to bind up the nation's wounds, with malice toward none and charity for all.

But the game is not over. It is never over. The fight for freedom continues. It burns too brightly in the hearts of too many Americans for its light to be extinguished completely. The forces that President Trump awakened and inspired have not gone away, and will not go quietly into the night. The elites may be sipping champagne on January 20, but they'd be in for a very tough time to come.

Donald Trump: An Inspirational Leader in the Middle East

By Peter Rawlings
TCMER Board Member



Pictured from left to right: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Donald Trump, Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani and UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan at the signing ceremony of the Abraham Accords at the White House on September 15, 2020
(Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)

When it comes to confronting the many challenges that face the modern Middle East, Donald J Trump has proved to be truly inspirational during the last four years. From achieving a remarkable breakthrough in the Israeli-Arab peace process to curbing the malign activities of Iran's Islamic revolution in the region, President Trump has already succeeded in establishing a legacy that is the envy of many of its previous administrations.

A succession of American presidents, from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama, have attempted - and failed - to break the endless cycle of violence that has come to characterise the region. It has only been the current distinctive style of Trump's leadership that has made a decisive impact on the landscape of the Middle East.

President Trump has managed to achieve these profound changes, moreover, at a time when the omens were less than auspicious than when the current term began in 2017. Back then, the region was in the midst of a bitter war against the fanatics of ISIS, who had seized control of large swathes of northern Syria and Iraq and were attempting to impose their barbaric form of government on the unhappy inhabitants of their so-called caliphate.

It was mainly thanks to decisive US action in fighting the jihadis that the American-led coalition was finally able to inflict a devastating defeat against the ISIS fanatics. Soon after the inauguration, the US dramatically revised the rules of engagement that had been in place under the prior administration, which had severely limited the ability of coalition forces to target ISIS terrorists. As a result, the US-led coalition was able to

achieve its goal of destroying the caliphate and inflicting heavy losses on the ISIS fanatics, to the extent that today the caliphate has been reduced to rubble.

For good measure, the US even succeeded in eliminating Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the mastermind of the ISIS reign of terror, while thousands more have either been killed or face being brought to justice, as is the case with the two British jihadis that belonged to an ISIS cell known as "The Beatles" who were earlier this month flown to the US to stand trial for their crimes, allegedly participating in the murders of the journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, as well as the humanitarian aid workers Peter Kassig and Kayla Mueller.

Indeed, it could be argued that the decisive action of President Trump has redefined the map of the Middle East, drawing a distinction between moderate, pro-Western Arab governments like the Gulf States that uphold the virtues of moderation and stability, and those, such as Iran and Turkey, that seek to sow discord and unrest.

Washington's peace initiative with the Taliban is another area where the administration's very different approach to Afghanistan's long-running civil war has surprised its critics. While the negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government still have a long way to go before a comprehensive peace agreement is signed, the fact that Washington has been able to sign an accord with the Taliban, with the prospect of ending two decades of continuous conflict, is nevertheless a significant achievement.

Another area where decisive US action has had a dramatic impact on the region is its insistence on withdrawing from the flawed nuclear deal with Iran and reimposing sanctions against the mullahs. This has had a devastating impact on Tehran's ability to meddle in the affairs of its Arab neighbours. With the Iranian economy crippled by sanctions, the regime no longer has the resources available to continue financing its terrorist infrastructure throughout the region at the same level it did previously.

It is the remarkable breakthrough, though, that the Trump Administration has achieved in the Arab-Israeli peace process that will stand as the crowning achievement of the last four years. As a result of the unstinting efforts made by Jared Kushner, the US president's son-in-law, to break the impasse in the peace process, Israel is now moving towards establishing normal diplomatic ties with the United Arab Emirates, Sudan and Bahrain, while a number of other Arab countries are giving serious consideration to following suit.

Major diplomatic breakthroughs of this nature would have been considered unthinkable when the administration first came to power. By taking a robust approach to some of the region's more intractable issues, however, such as relocating the American embassy to Jerusalem, the Donald Trump has produced a number of profound changes in the regional landscape, the consequences of which are likely to be felt for many years to come.

The breakthrough in the peace process, moreover, has resulted in the region being clearly divided between moderate, peace-loving countries that are prepared to engage in the peace process, and rejectionist regimes, such as Turkey and Iran, that are only interested in causing further bloodshed. It is these countries, as well as China, Russia, North Korea, Cuba and Venezuela that have most to fear with the return of Donald Trump along with a strong and successful America.

Vale Emir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah

By Zara Dawoud
TCMER Board Member



Emir, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah

Kuwait is mourning its Emir, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, who died on September 29, aged 91. The Arab world is also grieving for Sheikh Sabah, with a number of countries announcing official days of mourning and lowering their flags in deference to the late Gulf ruler who governed Kuwait for 14 years. He will be remembered as a man who strove to build bridges and resolve disputes across the region.

Sheikh Nawaf Al Sabah, who succeeded his brother as Emir yesterday, committed to continuing the important work of Sheikh Sabah and “to preserve the country’s dignity and protect its security”.

The passing of Emir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah was not unexpected. Sadly, the Kuwaiti leader had been unwell for many months and was recently hospitalized in the United States. His successor will be his half-brother Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah, but at eighty-three years old, the new emir-designate is himself of uncertain health and has not been active in politics or government. Hence, speculation will quickly shift to his choice of crown prince. Before Sheikh Sabah ascended to power in 2006, the role of emir was more symbolic, with the crown prince handling the day-to-day affairs of ruling. If his passing restores that model, the role of crown prince may become paramount sooner than later.

Unlike other Gulf Arab monarchies, Kuwait’s ruling al-Sabah family is not pre-eminent and effectively has to share power with other leading families and a vociferous parliament. Thus, the new emir’s choice of successor will need to be confirmed by this national assembly sometime within the next year—perhaps not until the next parliament is elected in November. The likeliest candidate for crown prince is the late emir’s seventy-two-year-old son, Defence Minister Nasser al-Sabah, who served as Prime Minister from 2006 to 2011.

Sheikh Sabah was indeed a man of peace. He was Kuwait's Foreign Minister for four decades, and served as prime minister before becoming Emir in January 2006. Throughout his career, Sheikh Sabah used his power to bolster diplomacy and preserve peace and stability in his home country and beyond.

This was an especially difficult task at a time when Kuwait's much larger neighbour, Iraq, was under Baathist rule. Border disputes intensified under Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, who ordered the invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Sheikh Sabah also led negotiations to secure war reparations after the Iraqi army retreated. Despite painful memories of the invasion, he did not allow for his country to hold grudges and reached out to Iraqis at their time of need. He stated Kuwait's support for Iraq's right to chart its own path after the fall of Saddam, at the UN General Assembly in 2003, and worked tirelessly towards improving relations between the two countries. He visited Iraq in 2012 and declared from there the importance of ties between the people of the two nations, followed by another visit in 2019. Kuwait pledged \$2 billion to help Iraq rebuild after ISIS was defeated in 2017.

Sheikh Sabah's positive influence reached across the Arab world. He worked alongside Saudi Arabia to broker the 1989 Taif Accord. The agreement, which many considered a gold standard of diplomacy, ended 15 years of civil war in Lebanon. He was also involved in peace talks between South and North Yemen in the 1970's, and hosted two summits to resolve Yemen's ongoing civil war. His moderating influence succeeded in ending violence and de-escalating conflict from Turkey to Bangladesh.

The late Emir of Kuwait combined an acute awareness of geopolitics with a humanitarian approach to foreign affairs, which became a hallmark to Kuwait's brand of diplomacy. In 2014, he was recognised as an "exemplary humanitarian leader" by then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. He called for a political solution to Syria's conflict and hosted several donor conferences to raise money for victims of the war. In 2015, Kuwait pledged half a billion dollars in aid at the third annual Syria donors conference in Kuwait City. Sheikh Sabah described Syria's civil war as the "biggest humanitarian catastrophe in the modern history of mankind".

The late Emir has left a legacy of peace, tolerance and solidarity, and will be remembered for his work to promote peace and prosperity in the Gulf and beyond. His wisdom and moderation have proven effective diplomatic tools and generations of Kuwaiti statesmen and politicians will continue to be inspired by his legacy.

Vale Bahrain's Sheikh Khalifa, World's Longest-Serving Prime Minister, Dies

By Zara Dawoud
TCMER Board Member



Prince Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa

Bahrain's Prince Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa, the world's longest-serving prime minister, who held the post since independence in 1971 has died at the age of 84.

Born on Nov 24, 1935, Prince Khalifa began to attend his father's royal court at the age of seven along with his elder brother, Prince Issa. He was named in 1970 as the head of the state council, the executive branch of government which became the council of ministers after independence from Britain.

He conducted difficult negotiations with the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, before independence over Shi'ite Iran's claims to the islands. A referendum to determine Bahrain's future resulted in an overwhelming vote in favour of independence under the rule of the Sunni Al-Khalifa dynasty, despite the sizeable Shi'ite population - whose size is disputed by the government to this day.

After independence, Sheikh Khalifa's government faced strong protests by leftist political groups. In 1972, elections were held for a constituent assembly which drafted Bahrain's first Constitution the following year.

The first parliamentary elections were held in December 1973, but Sheikh Khalifa's government dissolved the chamber in August 1975 after it refused to pass a state security law giving the government wide powers of arrest and detention without trial. Political unrest flared again in the early 1980s, and in late 1981 the government announced it had foiled an Iranian-backed coup attempt.

Prince Khalifa strove for many years to establish Bahrain as a regional financial hub. Unlike other Gulf States, the Kingdom has only modest oil resources. He played a key role in Bahrain's political and economic affairs for more than three decades. Working closely with his brother, the late emir Sheikh Issa bin Salman al-Khalifa, he favoured strong ties with Washington. Ties have since continued to grow, with Bahrain now hosting the US Navy's Fifth Fleet as one of Washington's most trusted allies in the region.

Mullahs Celebrate Biden's Possible Win

By Hamia Nair
TCMER Board Member



(Photo by Atta Kenare/AFP via Getty Images)

The Iranian regime has excitingly announced former Joe Biden's possible victory in the US presidential elections and is celebrating that the next US administration will, they hope, be from the Democrat Party.

Iranian authorities view the chance that Biden might take over the White House as a definite win for Tehran. Hesameddin Ashena, an advisor to Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, tweeted that Iranians "stood their ground bravely until that coward's time [Donald Trump] came to leave". Headlines in the state-controlled newspapers, which celebrated the news, included, "World without Trump!" (*Aftabe Yazd* newspaper), "Mr Withdrawal is Close to Being Kicked Out of White House", "Go to Hell You Gambler!" (*Sobhe Now* newspaper) "Trump's Card No Longer Valid for Media!" (*Aftabe Yazd* newspaper), "The Bankrupt US President Got Humiliated" (*Mardom Salari* newspaper), and "Trump Must Leave" (*Donyaye Eghtesad* newspaper).

The last three years has indeed been a nightmare for the Iranian regime and its proxies. No US administration before the current one has imposed such a draconian pressure on the mullahs, their rogue state and their allies.

At the beginning, President Donald J. Trump pulled the US out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, which Iran never signed and which paves the way for Iran to have nuclear weapons. Then, the Trump administration re-imposed primary and secondary sanctions on Iran's energy, banking and shipping sectors. During the last two years, several other Iranian entities were added to the sanction list. The killing of General Qassem Soleimani was also a huge blow to Iran's regime, particularly the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its proxies across the Middle East.

The sanctions, in fact, have imposed significant pressure on the Iranian government - to such an extent that the Iranian leaders have had to cut their funding to their allies, militia and terror groups.

A year into the pressure, the state-controlled Syrian newspaper *Al-Watan* reported that Iran halted its credit line to the Syrian government. Some of Iran's authorities publicly announced that they also do not have money to pay their mercenaries abroad. In an interview with the state-run Ofogh Television Network, for instance, Parviz Fattah, the current head of the Foundation for the Underprivileged (Mostazafan Foundation) stated:

"I was at the IRGC Cooperative Foundation. Haj Qassem [Soleimani, commander of the IRGC Quds Force who was killed by a US drone strike] came and told me he did not have money to pay the salaries of the Fatemiyoun [Afghan mercenaries]. He said that these are our Afghan brothers, and he asked for help from people like us."

Tehran's diminishing resources have also caused Iranian leaders to cut funds to the Palestinian terror group Hamas and the Lebanese militant group, Hezbollah. Hamas was forced to introduce "austerity plans" while Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Iran's proxy, Hezbollah, has also called on his group's fundraising arm "to provide the opportunity for jihad with money and also to help with this ongoing battle."

The country's economic situation became so dire that the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani admitted that the Islamic Republic is encountering the worst economic crisis since its establishment in 1979. The political deputy of the province of Bushehr, Governor Majid Khorshidi, told a gathering on July 14 that they should not ignore US sanctions: "We used to see this approach [of ignoring US sanctions] from the previous [Ahmadinejad] administration and unfortunately it still continues," he added. "But I have to say that sanctions have broken the economy's back".

Thanks to the current administration's pressure, Iran's currency, the rial, has been in free fall in the last three years. As of late October 2020, a US dollar is worth approximately 240,000 rials. Before the current US administration imposed a "maximum pressure" policy against Tehran, a US dollar had equalled nearly 30,000 rials. During the last year, Iran's oil exports also sank to a record low. The country's budget heavily relies on selling oil.

As pressure kept mounting against the regime, Tehran also faced several widespread protests in the country, which endangered the hold on power of the ruling clerics. Now, the regime feels that all of the current administration's pressures will be lifted soon and the golden days will be back again.

It is unfortunate that Iran's ruling mullahs view a possible victory of the Democrat Party in US elections as a win for the Tehran regime, its proxies and militia groups. President Rouhani has already called for restoring the nuclear deal. It could well be a loss for continuing peace in the region and for finally restoring the violated Iranian people's hoped-for human rights.

Joe Biden and the Muslim Brotherhood

By Khaled Abu Toameh



Pictured: Then US Secretary of State John Kerry (left) meets with Morsi in Cairo on March 3, 2013. (Photo by Khaled Desouki/AFP via Getty Images)

Will a new US administration possibly under Joe Biden help revive the Muslim Brotherhood, which is considered a terrorist organization by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Syria? Why is the Muslim Brotherhood rejoicing over the "victory" of Biden?

Some Arabs say they are worried when they see the Muslim Brotherhood celebrating the results of the US presidential election. These Arabs fear that the Muslim Brotherhood, backed by Qatar and Turkey, is preparing to make a comeback under a potential Biden administration.

The message Arabs are sending to the new US administration is: Do not repeat the mistakes of former President Barack Obama, whose administration sided with then Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, a Muslim Brotherhood member. The Arabs also want to remind a potentially new US administration that the Islamists and their supporters are inveterate liars who care only about their own interests.

"Muslim Brotherhood activists and media outlets have seemed very enthusiastic about the Democratic candidate Joe Biden's progress in US election results," according to the London-based *The Arab Weekly* newspaper.

"Analysts attributed this enthusiasm to their [Muslim Brotherhood's] wish for an encore of their experience in the era of former President Barack Obama, during which they played a remarkable role riding the wave of the 'Arab Spring' uprisings..."

"Pro-Muslim Brotherhood activists and media professionals in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and the Gulf states did not hide their prayers for a Biden victory..."

"From the outset, the Muslim Brothers did not hide their bias towards Biden. They presented him as a supporter of Islam and Muslims, highlighting the fact that he cites the Prophet's [Mohammed] hadiths..."

Meanwhile the Muslim Brotherhood published a statement on its official website in which it wrote that it "appreciates the American electoral process, which resulted in Mr. Joe Biden winning the position of the new President of the United States, a victory that proves that the American people are still able to impose their will."

The labeled terrorist organization said, with a straight face, that it "wishes Mr. Biden, the American people, and the peoples of the whole world to continue to live in dignity under the principles of freedom, justice, democracy and respect for human rights."

The Muslim Brotherhood called on Biden "to review the policies of support for [Arab] dictatorships, and the crimes and violations committed by tyrannical regimes around the world."

The statement surprised few Arabs, many of whom scoffed at the Muslim Brotherhood's talk about "freedom, justice, democracy and respect for human rights." Saudi writer Tariq Al-Homayed remarked:

"As expected, the Muslim Brotherhood organization came out of its hole and issued a statement congratulating Joe Biden and asking him to act against those they call dictatorships... We say expected, because the Muslim Brotherhood, who used to condemn their critics as agents of the West and Zionists, have revealed their face, and they are urging America to intervene against our countries now under the pretext of democracy."

Al-Homayed wondered whether the dictatorships the Muslim Brotherhood are talking about include Iran, Turkey and Qatar. "Are the dictatorships those who want to protect the Arab countries from the evil of the Muslim Brotherhood, their lies, and their terror?," he asked.

Al-Homayed pointed out that the Muslim Brotherhood had mourned Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's Quds Force, "who fought Iraqis, Syrians, and Lebanese, and was the architect of devastation in the region."

Soleimani was assassinated in a targeted US drone strike on January 3, 2020, in Baghdad. He was personally sanctioned by the United Nations and the European Union and was designated as a terrorist by the US in 2005.

Egyptian political analyst and writer Israa Ahmed Fuad, reacting to the Muslim Brotherhood statement, said that the terrorist organization "seeks in various ways to exploit any international circumstance in order to recycle itself and come to the fore after its sabotage project in the region failed with the collapse of their regime in Egypt in 2013" - a reference to the downfall of the regime of President Mohammed Morsi.

"There are several reports confirming the Muslim Brotherhood's support for Biden so that the organization would be able to avoid restrictions on political Islam movements," Fuad added. "The Obama era was an ideal period for them. Now, they are hoping that the US will remove them from the list of terrorist organizations."

Moroccan researcher Amin Al-Alawi said that the Muslim Brotherhood's "celebration of Biden reflects a nostalgia for the era of revolutions and the Democrats' support for the Arab Spring." The Muslim Brotherhood, he charged, "are partners of Democratic administrations in ruining the region and supporting extremism. The Muslim Brotherhood believes that Biden will bring them back to power [in Egypt], especially after [President Donald] Trump's four-year presence has aborted their ambitions."

Khaled Salah, editor-in-chief of the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Youm Al-Sabi'*, mocked the Muslim Brotherhood's greetings to Biden. Salah said that the Muslim Brotherhood is hoping that Biden will pressure Egypt to release senior members of the terrorist organization from prison. "The ignorant group [Muslim Brotherhood] is dancing with joy at Biden's victory, as if they are preparing to return to power on orders from the White House," he commented.

Nabil Na'im, a former member of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad Organization, said he too believes that the Muslim Brotherhood is seeking "to open a new page" with the new US administration. By congratulating Biden, Na'im argued, the Muslim Brotherhood is expecting the Democratic Party to adopt it, defend its existence and pave the way for its return to the political arena.

No US administration can afford to dismiss the warning bells sounded by Arabs in the wake of the Muslim Brotherhood's attempt to present itself as a peaceful group that seeks to bring freedom and democracy to the Arab world.

The Islamists are desperate to return to power in Egypt, which is why they are prepared to even court the American "Satan" to reach this goal. These are the same Islamists who have been condemning Arabs who have any contact with Americans. At this time of possible administrative change in America, the Arabs who do not support the Muslim Brotherhood - particularly those living in Egypt and the Gulf states - fervently hope that their alarm about Islamists will be heard loud and clear by Biden and his group.

Trump held Iran's Mullahs Accountable

By Don Gibbons
TCMER Board Member



Pictured: Iranian "Supreme Guide" Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (left) and President Hassan Rouhani on August 21, 2019. (Image source: khamenei.ir)

The only Western government taking concrete steps to hold the Iranian regime accountable for its human rights violations, destabilizing behaviour and aggressive policies in the Middle East is the Trump administration. On September 24, the United States blacklisted and slapped sanctions on several Iranian officials and entities over gross violations of human rights. Sanctions were also imposed on the judge who was involved in issuing the death sentence for the Iranian wrestling champion, Navid Afkari.

The EU, the UN and human rights organization have not taken any tangible action, even after Amnesty International released its report on Iran's shocking human rights violations. Amnesty International warned that the Iranian regime has committed unacceptable atrocities, including victims being frequently "hooded or blindfolded; punched, kicked and flogged; beaten with sticks, rubber hosepipes, knives, batons and cables; suspended or forced into holding painful stress positions for prolonged periods; deprived of sufficient food and potable water; placed in prolonged solitary confinement, sometimes for weeks or even months; and denied medical care for injuries sustained during the protests or as a result of torture."

The United States also imposed sanctions on Judge Seyyed Mahmoud Sadati, Judge Mohammad Soltani, Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court of Shiraz, and Adel Abad, Orumiyeh for being responsible for gross human rights violations, including torture, arbitrary detentions and unjustified executions.

Holding the Iranian leaders accountable only for human rights violation is not enough. Pressure must be imposed on the regime's military adventurism. Unlike the EU, the US is taking concrete steps in countering this rogue regime in other arenas as well. On September 21, President Trump issued a new executive order targeting Iran-related conventional arms transfers, aimed at targeting those who seek to make arms deals with the Iranian regime and skirt the UN arms embargo. Although the US recently drafted a resolution at the UN to extend the arms embargo on Iran, Russia and China exercised their Security Council vetoes. The other 11 members abstained.

Russia's leaders appear more than willing to help Iran. Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of Russia's Liberal Democratic Party, said in January 2020 that Russia needs to "offer Iran an agreement on military cooperation and urgently sell the most modern weapons so that no one dares throw anything in the direction of Iran." In the end, the UN Security Council voted on August 14 to permit the 13-year arms embargo on the Iranian regime to expire. This means that the Iranian regime will be permitted freely to buy, sell, import and export weapons.

To prevent Iran from making arms deals, sanctions have been effectively imposed on several significant organizations and individuals including Iran's Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics; Iran's Defence Industries Organization and its director, Mohammad Ghannadi Maragheh; the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran's (AEOI) Deputy Head of Nuclear Planning and Strategic Supervision, Mohammad Qannadi as well as Javad Karimi Sabet, AEOI's Deputy Head and the head of its Nuclear Science and Technology Research Institute; and Mammut Industrial Group and its subsidiary, Mammut Diesel, for being "key producers and suppliers of military-grade, dual-use goods for Iran's missile programs".

The sanctions are evidently intended to make companies and governments think twice about dealing with the mullahs and thereby risk doing business with the US. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, apparently feeling the pressure of the sanctions, lashed out at the US; in televised remarks, he angrily accused the US of "savagery".

Aside from risking doing business with the US, the European countries need to stop doing business with Iran because they are empowering a regime that is setting up terror cells on the European soil. Iran has also, since the beginning of the JCPOA, brought terror and assassination plots to the EU. If the mullahs acquire nuclear weapons and missiles to deliver them, they will not even need to use them; just the threat to European cities should be enough to produce instantaneous acquiescence.

In October 2020, an Iranian diplomat and several other individuals of Iranian origin were arrested in France, Belgium and Germany for what French intelligence officials concluded was a foiled bomb plot, behind which was the Iranian regime. Iran's regime has also been murdering dissidents on European soil. Ahmad Mola Nissi, a Dutch citizen of Iranian origin and a critic of the Iranian regime, was gunned down at his front door in November 2017. The Dutch authorities publicly acknowledged that it had "strong indications" that the Iranian government had commissioned the murder.

The EU needs to stop its appeasement policies with Iran's mullahs. It needs to join the US in holding the Iranian leaders accountable.

The Real Enemy of Islam

By Khaled Abu Toameh



Pictured: Macron and Erdogan at a conference on January 5, 2018 in Paris.
(Photo by Ludovic Marin/AFP via Getty Images)

In October France condemned Erdogan for comments he made about French President Emmanuel Macron's mental health and treatment of Muslims. Erdogan had suggested that the French president needed "some kind of mental treatment" because of Macron's attitude toward Muslims in France. "What else is there to say about a head of state who doesn't believe in the freedom of religion and behaves this way against the millions of people of different faiths living in his own country?" Erdogan said in a speech at a meeting of his Justice and Development Party. He also called on Muslims to boycott French goods.

Erdogan's remarks came in response to Macron's pledge to crack down on radical Islamism in France after a Muslim terrorist beheaded history teacher Samuel Paty on October 16. Paty had taught a class on freedom of expression during which he used cartoons of the Islamic Prophet Mohammed from the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo. Even before Paty was murdered, Macron defended the right to caricature the Prophet Mohammed. In September, he described Islam as a religion "in crisis" and announced that he would present a bill to strengthen a law that separates church and state in France.

Some Muslims see Erdogan's attacks on France as an attempt to divert attention from the growing criticism in the Arab world toward Turkey's meddling in the internal affairs of a number of Arab countries. Saudi Arabian activists have called for a boycott of Turkish products to protest Erdogan's repeated attacks on Arab leaders and countries.

Other Muslims see Erdogan's attempt to position himself as the defender of Islam in the context of the Turkish president's effort to market himself as a new Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and leader of the Muslim world.

"In an attempt to divert attention from the Arab boycott of Turkish products, Erdogan tried to employ the campaign against France to the benefit of his political calculations," Arab experts told the Gulf newspaper Al-Ain.

"Erdogan's statements and his defence of Islam do not bear in their essence any religious dimensions, but rather an attempt to win the friendship of the angry street and also to save his country's economy, which is suffering badly after the success of the Arab boycott of Turkish goods."

Noting that Arab business executives and others have called for a boycott of Turkish products to protest the "hostile policies of the Erdogan regime," the newspaper quoted Egyptian political analyst Tareq Fahmi as saying:

"Erdogan's talk about adopting the defence of Islam has become unacceptable after everyone realized that the matter is purely political and has nothing to do with the religious dimension. The issue is also related to addressing Arab and Islamic public opinion so that Erdogan appears in the image of the great Arab and Islamic leader. Erdogan aims to ride the current wave and try to employ and invest it politically in his battles against Europe and France."

Lebanese journalist Joseph Abu Fadel scoffed at Erdogan's call for the protection of Muslims in France:

"Erdogan calls for the protection of Muslims in France! We ask the Ottoman dreamer Erdogan about the Muslims who were slaughtered by his Muslim Brotherhood group and the jihadists in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Turkey."

Egyptian political analyst Walid Abbas questioned Erdogan's motives in defending Islam and leading the attacks on France. "It does not seem that the motives of the Turkish president to launch his campaign against France and its president, Emmanuel Macron, is to defend Islam or Muslims," Abbas remarked.

"A simple example of this emerged about four years ago, when Erdogan stopped defending the Uighur Muslims in China and even arrested one of the movement's leaders, who was a refugee in Turkey. He also deported hundreds of Uighur refugees in his country to China in 2019."

Abbas pointed out that Erdogan was also motivated by his concern over the decline of his popularity in Turkey:

"The Turkish president, since the emergence of his internal difficulties and their impact on his popularity, changed his political strategy and turned to igniting battles on the international scene, in an attempt to assert his regional influence. Paris has been the main party that has consistently opposed these attempts and has always stood against it."

Erdogan's main goal, he added, "is to inflame an internal national and religious conflict that allows him to force the Turkish people to rally behind the leader who wages fierce battles with the world under the slogan of defending Islam."

Tunisian writer Al-Habib al-Aswad, reacting to the crisis between France and Turkey, said "political Islam seeks by all available means to drag Islam into its wars and conflicts, the latest of which is its war on France." Al-Aswad added that Erdogan was simply trying to demonstrate his power and influence in the Islamic and Arab countries.

"The beheading of the French history teacher proves that political Islam has become a real threat to world peace in light of its expansionist tendency, which is currently

embodied by Erdogan's project, which not only targets the societies of Muslim countries, but also other societies that incubate important Islamic communities... When the Turkish president incited against France and President Macron, his primary concern was not religion or the Prophet Mohammed, but rather his geopolitical struggle with the French in the eastern Mediterranean, Libya, and generally North Africa and the Sahara region. Erdogan is convinced that Macron is a declared ally of countries that Ankara considers its enemies."

Egyptian media personality Mustafa Bakri said that Erdogan was taking advantage of various crises and cannot be sincere in his Defence of Islam. Erdogan, he added, "is not an honest man."

"He took advantage of the situation against France and claimed to be defending Islam. He wants to represent himself as a defender of Islam. Which Islam does he speak for? Erdogan has committed crimes in Libya, Syria and all Arab countries. He is the one who is offending Islam."

Emirati writer Mohammed Khalfan al-Sawafi said he agreed with many Arabs and Muslims who consider Erdogan an opportunist exploiting Islam to serve his own political agenda: "Some populist politicians think only about achieving their personal victories by using powerful and extremist rhetoric... What Erdogan came out with cannot be considered an endeavor to defend the interests of Muslims and the Prophet Mohammed, and he knows more than others what the consequences could be for the Muslim communities living in Western societies."

Al-Sawafi is apparently worried that Muslims in France and other European countries may face various restrictions, including the closure of Islamic charities and a ban on political activities in response to Erdogan's remarks.

Syrian journalist Baha al-Awwam said that Erdogan was trying to lead a "renaissance" or "revolution" in Islam as part of his effort to control the Arabs and Muslims. "The Arab region does not need an Islamic 'renaissance' or 'revolution,'" al-Awwam argued. Erdogan, he said, is currently seeking to control Libya, Qatar, Syria and Iraq.

"The Sultan [Erdogan] attracts supporters by supporting the peoples persecuted by their rulers... But you do not know that the extremists and blood merchants are the greatest beneficiaries of Erdogan's support. Not to mention that the 'Sultan' persecutes the Turks themselves whenever he is able to do so, and the evidence for this is his imprisonment of tens of thousands of his opponents. Opportunism is the name of the game that Erdogan is playing. He wishes to start a world war against the backdrop of the crisis of the French teacher. Wars represent his only salvation from facing his accumulated failures. Unfortunately for him, this will not happen, and Erdogan will fail in his endeavours."

The reactions of many Arabs and Muslims show that they view Erdogan as a more serious threat to Islam than Macron or others in the West. The voices of Erdogan's critics, however, rarely find their way to the mainstream media.

Ironically, Erdogan, who is currently calling for a boycott of French products, is himself being boycotted by a growing number of Arabs and Muslims. It is Erdogan, bemoaning the "insults" to Islam made by Westerners, who is himself being accused by Muslims of killing Muslims and occupying their lands.

Turkey: The Return of Demons

By Amir Taheri



(Photo by Adem Altan/AFP via Getty Images)

"Our past was in Asia but our future is in Europe!" This was how Mesut Yilmaz portrayed his vision for Turkey in a panel debate in Davos in the 1990s.

At the time, Yilmaz, who died on October 30 at the age of 73, was one of the rising stars of Turkish politics and a generation that seemed destined to complete a revolution that had started in the 1880s in the Ottoman Empire. That revolution had aimed at transforming the moribund empire into a modern Western-style state capable of reversing more than a century of decline that had earned the caliphate the sobriquet of "Sick man of Europe."

By the start of the 20th century, however, it had become clear that building a modern European-style state, based on the Westphalian principles, required the existence of a nation also in the European sense of the term; an impossible task as long as the Ottoman state remained a multi-national empire whose legitimacy was based on religion which, by definition, excludes the very concept of a nation-state.

The First World War and the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire provided the space in which the military and intellectual elite, led by Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Ataturk) could invent a nation to fit the modern Western-style state they wished to forge. With help from French linguists, new Turkey adopted a new alphabet based on the Latin, purged its language of as many Persian and Arabic words as possible, and seized control of religious institutions in the name of secularism.

By the 1980s, Turkey had all trappings of a Western-style nation-state. It was also a valued ally in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and a candidate for full membership of the European Economic Community (later the European Union). As a minister and then prime minister on three occasions, Yilmaz played a crucial role in negotiations with the Europeans, often with a mixture of naiveté and pessimism.

Yilmaz and his generation of Turkish politicians ignored two facts.

First, while post-caliphate Turkey had acquired the trappings of a Western-style nation-state, it was saddled with a pre-modern largely rural economic system based on state control and rentier abuse. Thanks to wide-ranging reforms started by Turgot Ozal and continued by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, albeit erratically, Turkey managed to put its economy on a path to modernisation, often by adopting criteria set by the European Union.

The second fact that Yilmaz and his generation ignored was their failure to develop a modern political culture without which a modern state structure and economy could be used, and abused, in the service of pre-modern and undemocratic narratives and projects. This is what has happened under Erdogan in the latest phase of his saga. In that phase, Erdogan has transformed Turkey from a candidate for EU membership and an aspirant to a front-seat position in the Western world into a challenger, not to say troublemaker, with an increasingly virulent anti-West discourse.

This reversal of course has led to the return of some old demons.

The first of these demons is an authoritarianism of the kind practised by Sultan Salim, the most controversial of Ottoman caliphs. Increasingly, Erdogan is trying to rule Turkey by fiat, often ignoring even a minimum of formal deference to his Cabinet, the parliament or even his own political party. At times, ministers are surprised to learn about new decisions through the media rather than through official decision-making channels. In some key domains, notably foreign policy, Erdogan has established a pattern of personal politics closer to Third World style despotism than modern democratic politics.

The second demon returning to haunt Turkish politics is the quest for legitimacy based on religious pretensions. Thus, Erdogan is now masquerading as a "ghazi" (holy warrior) and designating anyone who dares challenge his policies as "an enemy of the only true faith."

Some commentators, including this one (*mea culpa maxima culpa*), have described Erdogan's project as neo-Ottoman. However, it is now clear that what he offers is fake-Ottomanism rather than the old Ottoman in a new bottle. The Ottoman Empire was a multi-national, multi-faith space that often accepted, if not encouraging, a good measure of diversity even in cultural and personal and legal domains, whereas Erdogan pursues the mirage of conformity under his rule.

The third demon is that of empire-building.

Empire-builders of the first order, the Ottomans were always careful not to bite more than they could chew. Erdogan, however, is leading Turkey into empire-building adventures which it does not want and cannot afford. Turkey is now deeply involved in Cyprus, Libya, the Balkans and, more recently, Transcaucasia, where it risks direct conflict with Russia and Iran. It has provoked a potentially dangerous stand-off with Greece and France in the Aegean Sea and launched a war of words with the European Union as a whole. Ostensibly, Turkey's beef is about old maritime demarcation lines that deny it the right to tap underwater oil and gas resources. What Erdogan does not realize is that the potential market for those resources is the very European Union he is now casting as enemy. In any case, the disputed resources cannot be tapped without massive investment from the West, not to mention the technology needed.

In sub-Saharan Africa, Turkey is trying to gain a footstep with a mixture of bribery and religious propaganda.

Erdogan's empire-building project has also led him into deeper involvement with the remnants of the Muslim Brotherhood, and through them, with Jihadist adders that could one day decide to sting Turkey itself. Copying the Khomeinists, who have created their foreign legions in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen, Erdogan is recruiting mercenaries among the Turcoman in Iraq and local jihadists in the Syrian province of Idlib.

Finally, the demon of corruption is also back with a grand entry into Turkish politics and business. To be sure, corruption existed in both the Ottoman Empire and the Kemalist republic that replaced it in Asia Minor. But in both cases, some limits were kept in the name of religious probity or national interest. Now, however, corruption is going beyond all bounds, going beyond the old limit set by a United Nations study in the 1970s after which it becomes a way of life rather than a mere aberration.

Yilmaz and many in his generation of Turkish politicians proved to be false preachers of a gospel of Westernisation. Indirectly helped by Eurocentric politicians like Jacques Chirac, who still saw "the Turk" as a menace for Christendom, they missed the opportunity of final reconciliation with a continent of which Turkey has been an integral part for millennia.

By promoting a strategic break with Europe, Erdogan is leading Turkey into the unknown, with demons whispering in his ears.

Turkey Glorifies Historic Crimes

By Uzay Bulut



Pictured: Erdoğan in Ankara on October 5, 2020
(Photo by Adem Altan/AFP via Getty Images)

The Turkish government has, in recent years, escalated its rhetoric of neo-Ottomanism and conquest.

On August 26, for instance, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan gave a speech at an event celebrating the 949th anniversary of the Battle of Manzikert. This battle resulted in Turks from Central Asia invading and capturing the then majority-Armenian city of Manzikert, within the borders of the Byzantine Empire.

Parts of his speech were translated by MEMRI:

"In our civilization, conquest is not occupation or looting. It is establishing the dominance of the justice that Allah commanded in the [conquered] region.

"First of all, our nation removed the oppression from the areas that it conquered. It established justice. This is why our civilization is one of conquest.

"Turkey will take what is its right in the Mediterranean Sea, in the Aegean Sea, and in the Black Sea. Just as we are not eyeing the soil, sovereignty, or interests of anyone else, we will never give any concession from ours. This is why we are determined to do whatever is necessary politically, economically, or militarily. We invite our interlocutors to put themselves in order and stay away from mistakes that will open the way for them to be destroyed.

"We want everyone to see that Turkey is no longer a country whose patience is to be tried or whose determination, capabilities, and courage are to be tested. If we say we'll do it, then we will. And we will pay the price.

"If there is anyone who wants to stand against us and pay the price, let them come. If not, let them get out of our way, and we will see to our own business.

"And what did [Turkish poet] Yahya Kemal say? In the spirit of the armies here: 'This storm breaking out is the Turkish army, oh Lord! The army that dies for your sake is this one, oh Lord! May your renowned and strengthened name be raised up with the calls to prayer! Make us the victor, because this is the last army of Islam!'"

In another speech in May, Erdogan again commented on conquests, referring to the 1453 invasion of Constantinople by Ottoman Turks: "Our ancestors saw the conquest not only as the seizure of lands, but as the winning over of hearts. Recently, some presumptuous people have tried to define the conquest as occupation. Believe me they are completely ignorant. Ask them what conquest means and they will not know. Conquest is to open [things]. Conquest is especially to win hearts, but they do not know this. Our ancestors, starting a thousand years ago, first embroidered every part of Anatolia, Thrace, and the Balkans through alperens [combatants], dervishes, veterans.... As the Conqueror [Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II] entered through the walls of Istanbul, the Greek ladies said, 'We wish to see an Ottoman turban rather than see the cardinal cone on our heads.'"

One of Turkey's major problems is systematic historical revisionism promoted by the government and all other institutions in the country, including the media. There are significant falsehoods in this revisionism, particularly about the invasion of Manzikert (Malazgirt) and of Constantinople (Istanbul).

When Turks, led by Sultan Alp Arslan (real name: Muhammad bin Dawud), arrived in Manzikert in the eleventh century to invade the region, they did not "win hearts." Instead, they committed massacres. Manzikert was then a predominantly Armenian city. The massacre "began in 1019—exactly one-thousand years ago," writes historian Raymond Ibrahim, "when Turks first began to pour into and transform a then much larger Armenia into what it is today, the eastern portion of modern day Turkey."

As Ibrahim describes, the conquests were not achieved by "the winning of hearts." They were accompanied by brutal slaughters of Christian natives, captivity of women, girls and boys and destruction of churches.

"The most savage treatment was always reserved for those visibly proclaiming their Christianity: clergy and monks 'were burned to death, while others were flayed alive from head to toe.' Every monastery and church—before this, Ani was known as 'the City of 1001 Churches'—was pillaged, desecrated, and set aflame. A zealous jihadi climbed atop the city's main cathedral 'and pulled down the very heavy cross which was on the dome, throwing it to the ground,' before entering and defiling the church...

"Not only do several Christian sources document the sack of Armenia's capital—one contemporary notes that Muhammad 'rendered Ani a desert by massacres and fire'—but so do Muslim sources, often in apocalyptic terms: 'I wanted to enter the city and see it with my own eyes,' one Arab explained. 'I tried to find a street without having to walk over the corpses. But that was impossible.'"

Another historical fact involves the atrocities committed during the invasion of Byzantine Greek city of Constantinople by Ottoman Turks in the fifteenth century. The claim that Greek women said "they preferred Ottomans" cannot be further from the truth. The city actually fell after several weeks of Greek resistance. Historian Mark Cartwright writes that "the Byzantines were hopelessly outnumbered in men, ships, and weapons."

When Constantinople was invaded on May 29, 1453, adds Cartwright, "the rape, pillage, and destruction began."

"Many of the city's inhabitants committed suicide rather than be subject to the horrors of capture and slavery. Perhaps 4,000 were killed outright, and over 50,000 were shipped off as slaves. Many sought refuges in churches and barricaded themselves in, including inside the Hagia Sophia, but these were obvious targets for their treasures, and after they were looted for their gems and precious metals, the buildings and their priceless icons were smashed, the cowering captives butchered. Uncountable art treasures were lost, books were burned, and anything with a Christian message was hacked to pieces, including frescoes and mosaics."

The fall of Constantinople brought an end to the Byzantine Empire and led to the takeover of the region by the Ottoman Empire. The history of Ottoman Turks was also largely marked by persecution against Christians and other non-Muslims.

The Ottoman Empire lasted for some 600 years (from 1299 to 1923) and included parts of Asia, Europe and Africa. Christians and Jews under the Ottoman rule became dhimmis, second-class "tolerated" subjects, who had to pay a heavy jizya protection tax to stay alive. During this period, as historian Vasileios Meichanetsidis notes, the Turks engaged in oppressive practices, including:

- "the ghulam system, in which non-Muslims were enslaved, converted and trained to become warriors and statesmen;
- the devshirme system, the forced recruitment of Christian boys taken from their families, converted to Islam and enslaved for service to the sultan in his palace and to join his janissaries (new corps);
- compulsory and voluntary Islamization - the latter resulting from social, religious and economic pressure; and the sexual slavery of women and young boys, deportation and massacre."

Many Turkish beliefs about history are actually the complete opposite of historical truth. According to the Turkish study of history, for instance, what happened in Ottoman Turkey in 1915 was not genocide against Armenians. Turkey's Institute of History has produced a documentary in five languages about what it calls, "The Armenian rebellion against the Ottoman state, terrorism and propaganda." The documentary - in line with how the Turks study history - falsely claims that it was Armenians who attempted to massacre Turks and commit other crimes against them and that Turks only acted in self-defence. Most objective historians, however, conclude that the events of 1915 constitute genocide against Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks.

This revisionism in which Turkey engages is not only an insult to the victims of these crimes and to the descendants of the victims, but also a barrier that prevents many Turks from developing critical thinking and an understanding of empirical facts. A belief in jihad [holy war in the name of Islam], conquest in the name of Islamic doctrine and the dehumanization of kafirs (infidels) seem to play a large role in Turkish supremacist mentality and its leaders' current aspirations. In 2016, for example, Numan Kurtulmus, the then-deputy prime minister of Turkey, announced at a public meeting, "Independence means being able to stand up to kafirs (infidels) by calling them kafirs." In 2018, the Speaker of Turkey's parliament, İsmail Kahraman, described Turkey's military offensive against northern Syria as "jihad." "Without jihad," he added, "there will be no progress." During the same offensive,

Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) also called for "jihad" and declared in a weekly sermon that "armed struggle is the highest level of jihad."

Many Turks, therefore, still glorify Seljuk, Ottoman and Turkey's invasions and trivialize or deny altogether the crimes committed. Turkey's 1974 invasion of Cyprus, for example, was accompanied by many crimes such as murders, rapes, torture, seizure and looting of properties and forced disappearances of Greek Cypriots. The Turkish government nevertheless officially calls the invasion a "Cyprus Peace Operation" and every year proudly commemorates it.

Hate speech is also widespread in Turkish media. According to a report by the Hrant Dink Foundation, Armenians were the group most targeted by hate speech in Turkish media in 2019, followed by Syrian refugees, Greeks and Jews.

When massacres and other atrocities are systematically referred to as "glorious events," and ongoing human rights abuses – such as the incarceration by Erdogan of political prisoners become socially normalized incidents, it should not come as a great surprise that most Turks do not raise their voices against grave human rights violations in the country or Turkey's continuing occupation of northern Cyprus or Syria.

East Turkistan Calling for International Recognition

By Susan Yao
TCMER Board Member



The East Turkistan Government in Exile (ETGE), led by Prime Minister Salih Hudayar rally in front of the U.S. Capitol

In 1876, the Manchu Qing Dynasty invaded East Turkistan and renamed to “Xinjiang (New Territory)” in 1884. On November 12, 1933, East Turkistan’s people overthrew Chinese occupation, only to be overthrown six months later on April 16, 1934. On November 12, 1944, the Second East Turkistan Republic was established. Five years later, the Chinese invaded, once again and overthrew the East Turkistan Republic on December 22, 1949.

The Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Tatar, and other peoples of East Turkistan have spent the last 71 years fighting to restore their independence. For the last six years, millions of East Turkistanis, mostly of Muslim faith, have been held in concentration camps, prisons, and slave labor camps. According to survivors’ accounts, they’re being tortured, killed for their organs, raped, sterilized, and executed.

“Our towns, our religious places of worship, and even our cemeteries have been destroyed as China seeks to leave no evidence that we existed,” says Prime Minister Hudayar. “For us, there is only one solution, and that is the restoration of our country; East Turkistan’s independence. For without independence, we will have no human rights.”

The East Turkistan Government in Exile (ETGE) is advocating for official recognition from the world’s governments and parliaments. U.S. senators have introduced a bipartisan resolution that would declare the human rights abuses as a genocide.

In June, President Donald Trump signed the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act into law. The Canadian Parliament has recognized the abuses as genocide.

“We face and continue to face numerous obstacles and malicious efforts by China and its agents to coerce, infiltrate, influence, and undermine the East Turkistan Government in Exile and East Turkistan’s struggle to regain our independence,” Hidayar says. “However, we have full faith that with the support of our people and our foreign friends, we will be able to overcome these obstacles and malicious efforts. Nothing can stop us from pursuing our right to exist as a free and independent country.”

Prime Minister stated that he thanks the people of Bangladesh and all the other supporters worldwide for commemorating East Turkistan’s Independence Day and for protesting against China’s genocide of Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in Occupied East Turkistan.

Statement by the East Turkistan Government in Exile

We call on our people and various organizations across the diaspora to play a more active role in further strengthening our developing democracy and to continue working with us to restore our country’s independence as soon as possible.

We call on our friends and supporters worldwide to do more as their capabilities permit us to support East Turkistan and its people.

We urge the international community, world leaders, organizations, and individuals to put themselves in our place, even if for a moment, and hear our plea for help.

We call on governments worldwide to take action against the Holocaust of the 21st Century, taking place in Occupied East Turkistan.

We call on governments to recognize East Turkistan as an Occupied Country and help us through all means possible to regain our independence and put an end to China’s prolonged campaign of colonization, genocide, and occupation.

Position	Name	Location
President	<u>Ghulam Osman Yaghma</u>	Canada
Prime Minister	<u>Salih Hidayar</u>	USA
Vice President	<u>Abdulahat Nur</u>	Canada
Deputy Prime Ministers	Haji Mahmut Mirqedir Mirzat	Canada France
Interior Minister	Nurahmet Kurban	Switzerland
Foreign Minister	Adil Abbas	Canada
Finance Minister	Dr. Anwar Yasin	Japan
Minister of Education & Culture	Professor Memet Litip	Japan
Minister of Information & Communications	Hashimjan Turak	Canada



Toward a Transformational Peace in the Middle East

By Guy Millière



Pictured from left to right: Bahrain Foreign Minister Abdullatif al-Zayani, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Donald Trump, and UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan participate in the signing of the Abraham Accords.

(Photo by Saul Loeb/AFP via Getty Images)

On September 15, two peace agreements with Israel and known as The Abraham Accords – one with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and one with Bahrain, and – were made official at a White House ceremony. President Donald J. Trump spoke of a "historic breakthrough" and a "previously unthinkable regional transformation". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu added that the world is witnessing "the dawn of a new Middle East".

The agreements, which come 26 years after the last peace treaty, between Jordan and Israel, mark a further step towards the integration of Israel in the region.

The UAE and Bahrain are the first Arab countries to recognize Israel without requiring any concession from Israel (Netanyahu said that the extension of Israeli sovereignty to parts of Judea-Samaria and the Jordan Valley was suspended, not cancelled) and without any American financial contribution involved.

The UAE and Bahrain are also the first Arab countries to establish normal country-to-country diplomatic relations with Israel. Embassies will open soon. Direct flights will connect Ben Gurion Airport to Abu Dhabi and Manama. Both Arab countries will establish financial and economic relations with Israel, invest in Israel and have already signed contracts with Israeli companies.

Israel, one of the world's most inventive countries and a world leader in high technology, has much to offer wealthy countries. Both Arab countries and Israel will benefit immensely.

The UAE may also reportedly be openly entering into military cooperation with Israel. The defence of the UAE and Bahrain would be significantly improved. Perhaps Israel will be better able to ward off the "Death to Israel" attack that Iran has been threatening since its 1979 Revolution.

The text of the signed document speaks of the need to continue "the efforts to achieve a just, comprehensive, and enduring resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict", but the Emirates and Bahrain apparently did not consider the Israeli-Palestinian conflict an obstacle to peace or to full cooperation with Israel. Neither the UAE nor Bahrain received the slightest condemnation from other Arab countries. In fact, they received congratulations.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi said on Twitter: "I value the efforts of those in charge of the deal to achieve prosperity and stability for our region."

The Arab League, which, at the Khartoum Conference of 1967, delivered the three "nos" - no peace, no recognition, no negotiations [with Israel] - this year rejected the Palestinians' demand to reject the Abraham Accords.

Although the Palestinian Authority spoke of "betrayal," support for the Palestinian cause from leaders of the Arab world has been collapsing for years. Palestinian leaders are suddenly discovering that, as the Arab saying goes, "The dogs bark but the caravan moves on" - possibly without them.

Over the past decade, in fact, a geopolitical earthquake has swept through the Middle East that changed almost everything.

The Muslim Brotherhood seized power in Tunisia and in Egypt (although they were soon rejected). Libya's Gaddafi regime was destroyed and the country found itself abandoned to Islamist gangs. A jihadist "Islamic State" was created in northern Iraq and eastern Syria and quickly became the rear base for attacks against Saudi Arabia and the West. Syria was ravaged by an atrocious civil war. Lebanon came under the control of Hezbollah. The mullahs' regime in Iran showed ever more clearly its expansionist goals, nuclear ambitions and its will to become the regional hegemon.

Saudi leaders and Gulf monarchs presumably feared being overthrown - and reacted. They helped General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to seize power in Egypt and weaken the Muslim Brotherhood. They are currently helping Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, who holds eastern Libya, to fight the Islamist militias and Turkish troops that support Fayeze al Sarraj in Tripoli.

Saudi leaders and Gulf monarchs had the sophistication and foresight to see that the Obama administration had accepted and even encouraged Iran's regime, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood's rise to power in Tunis and Cairo, and had led the destruction of the Gaddafi regime. President Obama seemed intentionally powerless in the face of ISIS, the civil war in Syria and Hezbollah's takeover of Lebanon. He signed the Iran nuclear deal that gave the mullahs access to tens of billions of dollars, which they used to tighten their grip on their citizens, the region, and to finance Islamic terrorist groups threatening the Sunni world.

Saudi leaders and Gulf monarchs saw that they and Israel have a common enemy. The Iranian regime, their main enemy, was also Israel's enemy. They saw that Israel was a regional economic and military superpower, the Middle East's "Silicon Valley". They saw that, unlike Iran, Israel has no regional ambitions and is no threat to them. They began to see that it would be greatly in their interest to get closer to Israel and that the "Palestinian cause" had long since ceased to be an asset and had instead become an ungrateful burden. They remember that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1970 attempted to overthrow Jordan's King Hussein and assassinate him. They

remember that the Palestinians backed Saddam Hussein during the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait, which until then had peacefully been employing nearly half a million Palestinians.

Saudi leaders and Gulf monarchs, who were already engaged in discreet, unofficial with Israel, had tried pressuring the Palestinian Authority to soften its positions - to no avail.

On coming to power in January 2017, President Trump saw opportunities to move forward and found in Prime Minister Netanyahu a reliable ally who shared his strategic vision.

Trump also decided to quickly destroy the Islamic State, and a few months later he eliminated its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. On May 8, 2018, Trump also removed the United States from the Iranian nuclear deal; put in place strict sanctions against the Iranian regime to try to limit the internal and external damage it was doing and planning to do, and took out the Iran's terror chief General Qassem Soleimani.

In May 2017, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Trump announced his desire to "discard the strategies that have not worked"; proposed that the leaders of the Sunni Arab world "build new partnerships in pursuit of peace to act for "stamping out extremism and vanquish the forces of terrorism", and "to choose between two futures". He told them that if they fought terrorism and reformed, the United States would be on their side against Iran. He also suggested that they move closer to Israel. Trump's flight from Riyadh to Jerusalem was the first between the two capitals, and he was the first sitting President to visit the Western Wall in Jerusalem. He said the United States officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, went to Bethlehem to meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and, breaking with the previous diplomacy of self-flagellation and appeasement, accused Abbas of being responsible for inciting hatred and terrorism.

Trump also asked that the Palestinian Authority stop payment to terrorists and their families. When the PA refused to do so, he slashed US funding and ceased all dialogue with PA leaders. On May 14, 2018, he moved the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, and shortly after, announced that because UNWRA employs members of Palestinian terrorist groups, it is thus an "irredeemably flawed" which the US would no longer fund. He asked the State Department to publish a statement clarifying that from now on the United States will regard as refugees only the people who left the territory of Israel in 1948-49, and not their descendants.

His decisions did not provoke the general uprising of the Arab street that many so-called "experts" had predicted, and led only to mild reactions from Sunni Arab leaders.

Trump also refused to give in to the crippling delusions that had wrecked the now defunct Oslo Accords. He refused to make any concession to terrorists or to subvert the imperatives of security or the historical rights of Israel. He entrusted group led by his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, to develop a plan to establish peace between Israel and the Sunni Arab countries and to solve the Palestinian problem. The plan, presented in Washington on January 28, 2020, proposed to the Palestinian Authority a state that would be fully demilitarized, on the strict condition that the PA completely renounced terrorism, teach children peace and tolerance, and accepted

Israeli control for everything related to security and defence. As expected, the Palestinian Authority rejected the proposal.

Few commentators noted that the ambassadors of the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman were present at the White House that day, and few noted that the plan had the support of seven Sunni Arab states (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Morocco).

Other agreements appear set to follow. President Trump has noted that "seven, eight or nine more countries are ready to join the deal".

Saudi foreign minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said on August 19 that Saudi Arabia remained "committed to peace with Israel on the basis of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative". Helpfully, Abu Dhabi's Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan is close to Saudi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman; Prince bin Zayed undoubtedly did not make a decision without speaking to Prince bin Salman. The King of Bahrain, Hamed bin Issa Al Khalifa, is also close to Prince bin Salman. When asked if Saudi Arabia had approved Bahrain's signing the Accord, a spokesman for the kingdom replied that "it remains committed to working with all of its strategic partners to achieve a just and enduring peace within the region".

It is reasonable to think that Saudi Arabia will wait to know the outcome of the US presidential elections and work out the priorities of Saudi royal family members before a further commitment.

They can clearly see that, depending on the result in the US on November 3, the process can either continue smoothly or be threatened. They can also doubtless see that the strict sanctions against Iran put in place by President Trump in 2018 must not be removed if peace is to advance, but that the Democrats, if they win, are considering removing them. The Saudi rulers can also see that Iran recently made an agreement with China, and that President Trump intends to pursue an intransigent policy towards China. They also may justifiably fear that the Democrats, should they win, will revert to their previous policy of trying to persuade hostile regimes to change by appeasing them.

If the US initiative continues, a regional peace could take shape within the next few years. The Iranian regime would be contained and presumably prevented from developing nuclear weapons. The Palestinian Authority would be faced with a choice: either accept what was proposed - which may dwindle to less than what was proposed on January 28 - or suffer the consequences of further intransigence, further irrelevance, and even defeat.

For now, the Palestinian Authority is stubbornly sticking to its intransigence. "There is," Palestinian negotiator Hanan Ashrawi recently said, "an erroneous assumption that the Palestinians are defeated". Middle East scholar Daniel Pipes, in a reply to Ashrawai's statement, wrote:

"We [realists] understand that only defeat will convince Palestinians like Mrs. Ashrawi, and through them Iranian, Turkish, Islamist, leftist, fascist, and other anti-Zionists, that the century-plus conflict is over, that Israel has prevailed, and that the time has come to give up on futile, painful, and genocidal ambitions."

Meanwhile, Norwegian MP Christian Tybring-Gjedde has proposed President Trump, the driving force behind the accords, for the Nobel Prize for Peace. A few days later, a

Swedish MP, Magnus Jacobsson, also proposed that President Trump receive the Nobel Peace Prize - this time for agreements he obtained between Kosovo and Serbia (Kosovo, a Muslim state, intends to establish diplomatic relations with Israel and to locate its embassy in Jerusalem). President Trump would be a deserving choice that would shed a renewed honour on the Nobel Committee.

If President Trump is able to continue following the bold, unconventional path he has traced, he will most likely succeed where all his predecessors have failed. What he has accomplished already - in less than four years, with so many forces determined to undermine him (for instance, here, here and here) - is extraordinary.

Deploring that France and the European Union refused to recognize the importance of the event and chose to continue supporting the Palestinian Authority unconditionally, French MP Meyer Habib said on television, "In less than four years, Trump has done more for Israel and for a real peace in the Middle East than any other American President in seventy-two years."

British journalist Melanie Philips wrote: "If the moderate Arab world now finally understands that Israel is not its enemy but its ally, this could begin to undermine the foundations of irrational and self-defeating hatred that has fueled the Islamist war against the West. While intractable Islamic fanaticism will not just disappear, the Abraham Accords might give Arab and Muslim reformers wind in their sails to bring their culture into an accommodation with the rest of the world."

"Western Europe and the American left," she added, "will be the last people on earth to realize this."

The Future of Arab Normalization with Israel

By Alan M. Dershowitz



Pictured: An Etihad Airways flight carrying a delegation from the UAE on a first official visit, lands at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport on October 20, 2020. (Photo by Jack Guez/AFP via Getty Images)

Now that the Sudan has joined the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in normalizing relations with Israel, the future seems bright for even more Arab countries to make peace with their former enemy. The big prize, of course, would be Saudi Arabia, and already we are hearing rumours from its leaders pointing in that direction. Even Lebanon, which currently houses Hezbollah, has dropped hints about possible peace overtures.

The possibility does exist that before long, most of the Sunni Arab states will recognize that their interests lie in a peace process with Israel. They will see the economic, technological, diplomatic and military advantages in having Israel as an ally instead of an enemy.

An important uniting force behind this movement is Iran, a non-Arab Shiite Muslim state, which is a destabilizing force among other Muslim nations. Iran is the largest exporter of terrorism and the only country with the potential for developing a nuclear arsenal. Its hegemonic goals extend throughout the Middle East and require the overthrow of stable Sunni regimes. These regimes realize that Israel, which is the primary target of Iran's animosity, will never allow it to develop nuclear weapons. They also realize that Israel plays an important role in constraining Iran's exportation of terrorism.

But more is involved in this new development than the old cliché of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." Israel is a stabilizing influence in an unstable region of the world. It is a democracy, a military and technological innovator, an economically advanced country. It can assist its new allies in each of these areas, as it has already begun to do even in the short time since normalization began.

U.S. President Donald J. Trump hinted at the possibility that Iran may someday join in the process toward a more stable and peaceful Middle East. That seems unlikely with

the current regime. The Ayatollahs, with the help of American sanctions, are bankrupting Iran and destroying its historically affluent middle class. Were there to be a popular election, the current regime would fall. The middle unity of Sunni Arab nations with Israel may increase the pressure for regime change in Iran. That would be a good thing for the Iranians and for the region.

The other outlying regime is Turkey, which is a military powerhouse and a member of NATO. Although the Turkish people, like the Iranian people, have no history of hatred against the nation state of the Jewish people, its current leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, like the Iranian Ayatollahs, has stirred up hatred and animosity. They have done so largely for domestic reasons, to distract attention from their failed leadership. It is ironic that not so long ago, Iran and Turkey were Israel's closest allies in the Middle East, while the Arab states that are not in the process of making peace with Israel were its most intransigent enemies. The Middle East has changed quickly and it can change back just as quickly.

The big losers from these new developments are the Palestinians. Their leadership has "never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity," as Israel's former Foreign Minister Abba Eban put it. This may be their last opportunity to achieve a reasonable two state solution. Israel's Arab neighbours have demonstrated that the Palestinian cause is not as high on their agenda as it appeared to be in the past. These nations understand that the situation the Palestinians now find themselves in have been the result of self-inflicted wounds - most importantly an unwillingness to take yes for an answer when the Israelis have offered them statehood.

Even now, the Palestinian leadership refuses to sit down and negotiate with Israel. They must understand that they will not get a state as the result of the boycott movement, protests on university campuses or meaningless resolutions of the United Nations. Recent developments make it clear that statehood for the Palestinians will come only through negotiations with Israel. The time has come for the Palestinian Authority to join with other Sunni Arabs in recognizing that the nation state of the Jewish people is here to stay and that negotiation is the only road to statehood and a permanent peace that will benefit both the Palestinian and Israelis, as well as the rest of the region, and indeed the entire world.

Saudi Prince Bandar unleashes on Palestinian Leadership

By Arthur Tane
TCMER Executive Director



Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz's unprecedented scathing attack on the Palestinian leadership adds Saudi Arabia and its citizens to the growing list of Arabs who regard the Palestinians as "ungrateful."
(Image: Aljazeera)

Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz's scathing and unprecedented attack on the Palestinian leadership, during an interview aired by Saudi Al-Arabiya television station on October 6, adds Saudi Arabia and its citizens to the growing list of Arabs who regard the Palestinians as "ungrateful."

During the interview, the prince, a former Saudi ambassador to the US, said that "the Palestinian cause is a just cause, but its advocates are failures, and the Israeli cause is unjust, but its advocates have proven to be successful."

He accused the Palestinians of cozing up to Saudi Arabia's foes, Iran and Turkey, and criticized them for accusing the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain of betrayal for agreeing to establish relations with Israel." He also accused the Palestinians of "ingratitude or lack of loyalty" toward Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries that supported them for decades.

After the interview, many Saudis and other Gulf citizens expressed support for Prince Bandar bin Abdulaziz's criticism of the Palestinians, with some saying the time has come for a new Palestinian leadership that prioritizes its people's interests and does not pocket the financial aid sent to them by the Arab countries and the West.

"I believe that the time has come to form a permanent Arab committee under the umbrella of the Arab League to manage the Palestinian issue and conduct face-to-face dialogue with Israel," said Emirati columnist and political analyst Abdullah Nasser Al-Otaibi. "Today, after this very revealing and frank talk (by the Saudi prince), I strongly believe in the need for the Arabs to find a way to manage the Palestinian issue."

Al-Otaibi is one of several Arab commentators who have recently talked about the need for the Arab countries to take matters into their own hands and try to solve the

Israeli-Arab conflict without involving the failed and corrupt Palestinian leadership. This is a demand that no Arab has dared to make in the past few decades. It demonstrates that a growing number of Arabs believe that there can be no solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict as long as the current Palestinian leadership remains in power.

Saudi political analyst Fahim Al-Hamid noted that over the past several decades, the Palestinians have missed many opportunities to find a solution to their conflict with Israel.

Referring to the ongoing power struggle between the Palestinian ruling Fatah faction in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Al-Hamid accused the two parties of 'trafficking' in the Palestinian issue.

"When Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, it was possible for the Palestinians to seize the opportunity to achieve more gains," he wrote. "Hamas, however, refused to unite the Palestinians and established the foundations for the beginning of the division between the Palestinians. Instead, Hamas sought to raise funds from Turkey, Qatar and Iran."

Praising Prince Bandar's statements, Al-Hamid added: "It is unfortunate that the Palestinian brothers have traded in their issue for more than 60 years and insisted on not compromising, sabotaging negotiations and rejecting all peace initiatives. The time for trafficking in the concerns of the Palestinian people is over. The interest of the people in Gaza and the West Bank requires the intervention of rational Arabs to achieve comprehensive peace in the region. We tell the Palestinians what (US) President (Abraham) Lincoln said: 'You can fool all the people some of the time and some people all of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.'"

Saudi columnist Mohammed Al-Saaed, echoing Prince Bandar bin Abdulaziz's criticism, refuted Palestinian claims that they do not meddle in the internal affairs of Arab countries:

"Over the past six decades, the Palestinians have presented themselves as being neutral on Arab issues. However, they [Palestinians] have turned themselves into puppets in the hands of Qatar, Turkey and Iran. The Palestinians have practiced systematic terror against most Arab countries and directed their guns and bombs against the Arabs."

Al-Saaed said that the Palestinians have also been engaging in another form of terrorism: extorting money from the Arabs "or else they count you as hostile (to the Palestinians). We must not forget their terrorist operations against consulates and embassies, assassinations of Saudi figures, as well as the hijacking and bombing of airplanes."

He went on to accuse the Palestinians of insulting Saudi Arabia by burning its flags and pictures of its leaders and publishing offensive cartoons in media outlets run by members of Fatah and Hamas. Al-Saaed added:

"Saudi Arabia only wants (the Palestinians) to stop hurting the kingdom and its citizens. The Palestinians must be aware that the popular mood on the Saudi street is no longer able to tolerate these abuses. The Palestinian leadership must take a rational position before losing Saudi Arabia's support."

Saudi political analyst Abdel Rahman Al-Mulhem praised the Saudi Prince for exposing the Palestinian leadership failures. "The masks have fallen and the truth has been revealed," Al-Mulhem wrote. "Palestinian leaders could have ended the tragedy of the Palestinian people by accepting United Nations Resolution 242," he said, referring to the November 22, 1967 resolution that talked about "the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security and peace within recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force."

Al-Mulhem said he fully agreed with the Saudi prince's assertion that Palestinian leaders do not want to end the conflict with Israel because they want to preserve their personal interests, and added: "Palestinian leaders missed many opportunities that could have ended the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but they squandered these opportunities so that they could continue to trade in the Palestinian issue... Palestinian leaders have chosen to align themselves with Iran, the No. 1 enemy of the Arab nation. What has Iran done for Palestine since 1979? Iran is a terrorist country. Terrorism only breeds terrorism. Palestinian leaders stole the aid sent to the Palestinian people and built mansions in Washington, Paris and London, while ignoring the suffering of their people."

Commenting on the Saudi prince's statements about the Palestinian leadership's corruption and ineptitude, Fahd Al-Shoqiran, a Saudi researcher and columnist, wrote that the Palestinians "must be reminded that the hundreds of billions of money their leaders received to support their cause from Saudi Arabia throughout its history were capable of building the Palestinians huge cities."

Instead, Al-Shoqiran said, Palestinian leaders used the money to buy private planes and luxurious buildings in Europe and the US. "For the Palestinian leaders, the Palestinian issue is just an investment project that generates huge profits," he said.

"That's why the talk about the need for an efficient alternative political leadership causes them to panic. The prince's speech was clear, direct, accurate and frank. The speech is a wake-up call. Things have changed, and whoever wants a solution should seek ways to achieve one."

Palestinian leaders, meanwhile, appear to be afraid of responding to the serious charges made by Prince Bandar bin Abdulaziz.

These leaders have not sent their people to the streets to burn Saudi flags in protest of the criticism made by the prince and other Saudis. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and his officials are well aware that, unlike the UAE or Bahrain, Saudi Arabia is a large and extremely powerful country. They also know that losing the support of Saudi Arabia would mean forfeiting the backing of several other Arab countries closely associated with the kingdom.

The latest Saudi media onslaught against the Palestinians could be seen as a prelude for Saudi Arabia following suit with the UAE and Bahrain by establishing relations with Israel. What is evident, meanwhile, is that, where Saudi Arabia is concerned, the Palestinians are on very thin ice. In fact, they may wake up to discover that the ice is melting all over the Arab world.

Britain in Oman: Washington's Strategic Partner

By Jonathan Campbell-James



Duqm emerging Port City. (Image: Inside Arabia)

London is investing heavily in supporting its relationship with Muscat, not least because Omani mediation can often be more effective than its own in fostering regional stability and security.

On September 12, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace announced that the British Joint Logistics Support Base on Oman's southeast coast will be enhanced with a further £23.8 million in funding for infrastructure expansion. Revealed during the secretary's visit to Oman, the investment in Duqm port will "triple the size of the existing UK base and help facilitate Royal Navy deployments to the Indian Ocean," according to an official Defence Ministry statement.

The ministry also described the visit as a "renewal" of a "hugely valuable relationship," even though the two countries signed a new Joint Defence Agreement in February 2019. That agreement was interpreted as the ailing and fiercely Anglophile Sultan Qaboos making institutional arrangements that would outlast him, in keeping with the spirit of the original 1800 agreement, which declared that the bond between Oman and Britain should be "unshook till the end of time." London may have felt a need to reaffirm the health of the bilateral relationship now that Sultan Haitham has been in power for six months, since his Anglophile seems more muted than that of his late uncle.

In addition, the partnership renewal should be seen in the context of fallout from Brexit, Iran's continuing export of instability, and China's growing regional presence. The Duqm base is ideally located to support allied operations in the Persian Gulf, complementing the recently enhanced UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain. It will also support Australian, Indian, and U.S. operations in the Indian Ocean, where New Delhi is already investing in naval facilities on Assumption Island in the Seychelles and Agalega in Mauritius. Like London, India strengthened its defence agreement with Oman in recent years following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's February 2018 visit to Muscat, and its submarines and P-8I aircraft have been using Duqm's facilities.

Another benefit of British-Omani defence “renewal” is acknowledging the value of existing military and intelligence arrangements. The two governments will continue their reciprocal loan service arrangements whereby officers from one country are loaned to the other to serve in executive roles. And Secretary Wallace made special mention of bilateral understandings on intelligence matters, emphasizing their importance to both countries.

Marrying Commercial and Military Interests at Duqm

In keeping with Oman’s desire to be open to all and dominated by none, the new British investment in Duqm will help counterbalance Chinese commercial interests in the country’s special economic zone. Run as an Omani joint venture with the London-based firm Babcock International, Duqm Naval Dockyard has two dry docks capable of receiving Britain’s new Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers and handling major ship repairs. It is also offering its services to other navies and has won repair contracts for two U.S. fleet tankers and an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer. In addition, the port has a military-grade 4,000-meter airfield, and although British diplomats are not forthcoming on the subject, London will likely use Omani warehousing and maintenance facilities to store equipment for an armoured brigade group, equivalent to that held afloat by the United States off Diego Garcia.

Britain’s ability to fast-generate forces in the Gulf without needing to place permanent manpower there is a highly visible demonstration of its support for regional allies, which will no doubt be reaffirmed regularly during joint exercises. In the past, heavy equipment needed to be shipped out well in advance of the need for it, and both materiel and personnel suffered from not being properly acclimatized to local conditions. Now, however, forward basing and regular training should provide a much faster-into-action path and more effective capability. The BBC has speculated that the British Army may switch its live-fire and tank manoeuvre training from Canada to Duqm, using the nearby 4,000-square-kilometer Ras Madrakah training area.

Local and Regional Implications

London is offering this degree of intimate support early in Sultan Haitham’s reign, when Oman faces significant challenges such as the coronavirus scourge and falling oil prices. Short on financial reserves, the country’s economy is particularly vulnerable to the latter threat. Haitham is determined to reboot Oman’s economic situation, and fiscal measures to achieve this will inevitably generate some degree of social stress before dividends can be reaped. Acknowledging these risks, the increased British funding for Duqm will complement the sultan’s priorities and support Oman’s biggest strategic investment.

Apart from announcing the new port funds, Secretary Wallace held talks with several Omani officials during his trip: Shihab bin Tarik, the deputy prime minister for defence affairs; Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi, the minister of foreign affairs; and Gen. Sultan al-Numani, minister of the Royal Office. He did not officially meet with Assad bin Tariq, the deputy prime minister for international relations and cooperation, suggesting the latter’s further withdrawal from frontline politics.

Also noteworthy was the presence of Abdullah bin Hamad al-Badi, formerly Oman’s ambassador to Yemen and now the foreign minister’s point man on reconciliation efforts in that country. Britain has been keen to provide discreet but strong support to

Oman's mediation initiatives in the Yemeni conflict, and Duqm's logistic facilities may in time play a supporting humanitarian role there.

The British delegation included Sir Edward Lister, chief strategic advisor to the prime minister, who is not known to have had much prior interest in the Middle East. He inherited the mantle of chief government efficiency guru last year, however, so he may have been present as an advocate of administrative reform. Sultan Haitham seems to have a keen interest in that issue judging by his recent government restructuring.

On another matter of note, Secretary Wallace followed in the recent footsteps of Prince William by visiting the Musandam Peninsula and the Omani naval base at Goat Island, overlooking the contentious Strait of Hormuz. A prosaic explanation for the side trip may simply be the peninsula's spectacular scenery. More likely, though, it was intended to show solidarity with Oman's commitment to holding onto Musandam. Separated from the rest of Oman by UAE territory and traditionally coveted by the emirate of Ras al-Khaimah, the small coastal province has experienced bouts of tribal discontent lately, which Muscat has countered with increased government investment. Britain has also embarked on a series of joint exercises in the area with Omani troops, using the Musandam's rugged terrain to train in mountain warfare techniques.

As for the longstanding and recently refreshed American defence agreement with Oman, the United States and Britain have separately forged bilateral accords with most of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. On the ground, these agreements have worked in a complementary, non-competitive fashion. London evidently feels a particular affinity for Muscat and its Ibadi strand of religious tolerance, but Washington has special affinities of its own with other governments—what matters in Oman is that current arrangements seem to suit all parties equally well.

Turkey's Dirty War against Syria, Libya and Armenia

By Don Gibbons
TCMER Board Member

Several hundred Syrian fighters have been sent by Turkey to support Azerbaijan in its ongoing conflict with Armenia, according to a war monitor and a Syrian rebel commander.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which has researchers across Syria, said over 300 Syrian fighters has been deployed to Azerbaijan, Turkey's long-time ally.

These Syrian fighters come from two ethnic Turkmen armed groups, including the Sultan Murad Division and the Suleyman Shah Brigade. The two Turkish-backed Syrian rebel groups have been important actors in Turkish-controlled areas of northern Syria.

Ziad Hajj Obeid, a commander with the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army, told Rudaw TV, a Kurdish TV channel in Iraqi Kurdistan, on October 24 that there are two reasons Syrian rebels are driven to join the fight in Azerbaijan.

"Obviously, some went to Azerbaijan for financial incentives, but others made the decision out of a sense of duty towards our Turkish allies," Obeid said, adding that "Turkey has been our main supporter in Syria, and we're simply returning the favour."



Turkey said it will support Azerbaijan with all means necessary, as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed his country's support for Azerbaijan, calling Armenia "the biggest threat to peace in the region."

The Armenian government has acknowledged that Turkish military "experts" were "fighting side by side with Azerbaijan."

Nagorno-Karabakh is a mountainous region, and fighting in the mountains is not the same as on the streets. Many Syrian fighters aren't prepared for this.

Turkey is also committing "horrific violations" against civilians in northern Syria, according to a report in the Abu Dhabi-based newspaper *Al-Roeya*.

As a result of these violations, a million civilians living in the area, parts of which are controlled by Turkey, are facing "an unprecedented humanitarian crisis."

Arab political analysts and human rights advocates who spoke to *Al-Roeya* said that the Turkish regime, about a month ago, cut off the water supply to the residents of the region, where the temperature easily reaches more than 39° Celsius (103° Fahrenheit). It is a move, they said, that "amounts to crimes against humanity." They called for launching an international investigation into Erdogan's violations and "crimes."

Syrian political activists said that Erdogan's filthy war comes as a punishment for the residents of the city because they live under the administration of the Syrian Democratic Forces, which Ankara considers its enemy.

According to Hawar News Agency (headquartered in Al-Hasakah, Syria), the Turkish authorities have been in control of the areas of Ras Al-Ayn and Tell Abyad since last October. The area includes the Alouk water station, which used to supply the city of Al-Hasakah and its environs with water.

Since the occupation of Ras Al-Ayn, the Turkish authorities have stopped pumping water from the Alouk station eight times, depriving more than a million people of water and threatening a humanitarian catastrophe there, especially in wake of the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Syrian lawyer and human rights activist Khaled Ibrahim said that cutting water to nearly a million people in the city of Al-Hasakah comes as a continuation of Ankara's hostile policies in northeastern Syria.

Ibrahim pointed out that the coronavirus pandemic requires hygiene measures to prevent it from spreading. "The civilians are being punished by Turkey, which is fighting the aspirations of the Syrian people and committing war crimes against humanity," he said.

Human rights activists in the region, Ibrahim added, have been documenting Turkish crimes against civilians in order to hold the Turkish authorities to account for their crimes.

Political analyst Mayyar Shehadeh said that Turkey is "pouring gasoline on the fire and exploiting the state of weakness in the Middle East to extend its influence."

Shehadeh added that the Erdogan regime is trying to "flirt with the Sunni Muslims in the region to have them submit to its control and use them in the war against the Shiites and the Kurds."

He pointed out that although the European Union has objected to Erdogan's "provocations", it has not taken any effective action to stop him from pursuing his violations against the civilians in northern Syria.

Egyptian lawyer and human rights expert Saeed Abdel Hafez said that the occupying Turkish authorities "continue to blackmail about a million citizens (of Al-Hasakah) by cutting off the water supply - a crime against humanity that requires an urgent investigation by the United Nations bodies to protect civilians."

Another report in the pan-Arab newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* about the situation along the Turkey-Syria border revealed that Turkish troops in recent years have killed 464 Syrian civilians, including 59 women and 87 children under the age of 18.

"Ankara has switched from a pledge to return the Syrians to their country to the shooting of any Syrian trying to approach the border separation wall between Turkey and Syria," according to the report.

"In recent months, incidents of violations, including beatings, insults, and racial discrimination, outside the framework of the law and international treaties on the rights of the displaced, have increased almost daily... The Syrians are subjected to beating and insults, and at the end of their detention period they are deported to Syria, with the revocation of temporary protection cards for refugees."

The report also revealed that Syrian refugees held in Turkish detention centres do not get any meal within two days of their detention and are forced to drink water from bathrooms.

"Prison guards take turns insulting the detainees as they enter the prison. The detainees are beaten for trivial reasons, such as looking at the guards. In addition, there are recurring reports that the Turkish soldiers steal the belongings and money of the displaced Syrians caught at the border."

Erdogan's human rights violations against Syrian civilians come amid increased indications that Turkey is stepping up its involvement in the civil war in Libya. According to some reports, Erdogan continues to assist "mercenaries" and Syrian militiamen heading to Libya to participate in the fighting between the warring parties there. Ankara deliberately attracted elements from the Syrian border into Turkish territory and then to Libya to fight alongside the militia of the Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA), according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

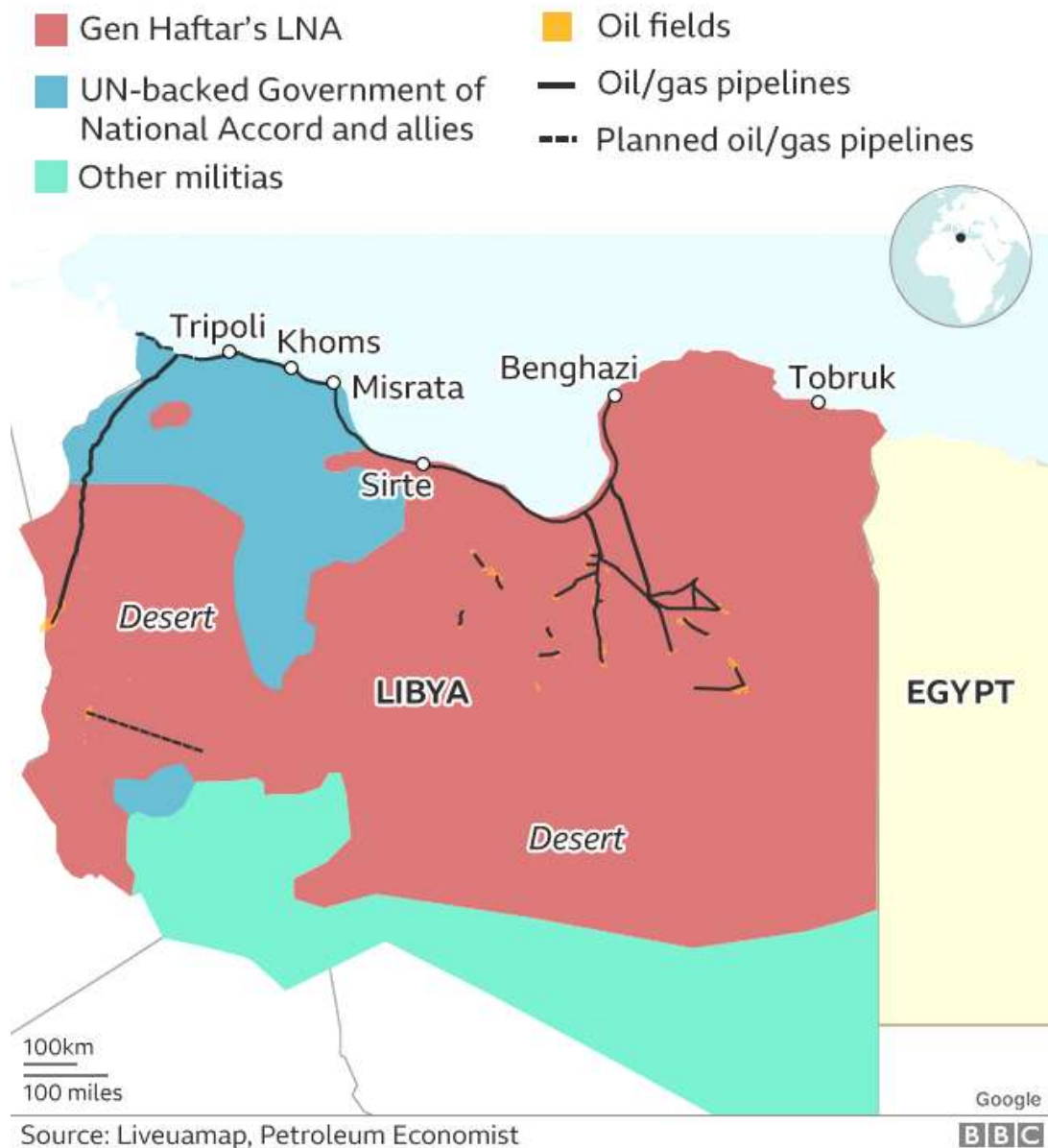
Ankara has previously used Syrian militias in the Libyan conflict. Turkey sent between 3,500 and 3,800 paid Syrian fighters to Libya in early 2020, according to a July report by the U.S. Defence Department's inspector general.

The deployment was part of Turkey's efforts to support the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) against forces loyal to Commander Khalifa Haftar. Despite an arms embargo imposed on Libya by the United Nations, Turkey has also supplied drones and an air Defence system to the U.N.-recognized GNA.

The deployment of Syrian militias by Turkey reportedly played a role in changing the course of Libya's war.

Maj. Gen. Ahmad Al-Mismari, spokesman of the Libyan National Army (which is fighting against the Turkish-backed GNA), notes that the Turkish armed forces are using four military bases in Libya: "Turkey has both air and naval bases in Misrata. One of the largest naval military bases in Libya-Khoms – is also under control of Turkey, as well as the Al-Watiya airbase, where the Turkish air forces are deployed with its personnel and equipment."

Recently, Al-Mismari accused Erdogan of exploiting the poverty of some Syrian youths to recruit them as mercenaries in the civil war in Libya.



On September 5, Egyptian journalist Mohammed Musa revealed that intelligence reports suggest that Erdogan is involved with the Islamic terror group Al-Qaeda "as part of a scheme to destroy the region and control its resources." Intelligence documents obtained by Musa showed that Erdogan was in contact with the Al-Qaeda-linked Ben Ali terror group, headed by Abdel Azim Musa Ben Ali.

According to Costas Mavrides, a Cypriot member of the European Parliament and committee chair at The Union for the Mediterranean:

"In modern neo-Ottoman Turkey, government officials, including President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his ministers, make statements with complete contempt for international and European Union law while dissenting voices are silenced or persecuted... The spirit of conquest is dominant in the modern Turkish political scene and their regional interventions. Rooted in the Ottoman 'law of the sword' - or the idea that the conqueror can rule a conquered country or territory according to his desires - Turkey has returned to its Ottoman ambitions."

Qatar – USA Third Strategic Dialogue

By Hamia Nair
TCMER Board Member



HE Sheikh Mohamed and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo who took part in the 3rd Qatar-US Strategic Dialogue in Washington (Image Doha News)

On September 14 and 15, the third U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue is due to be held in Washington. The Qatari side is expected to be led in person by its Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdulrahman al-Thani. His counterpart, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, is likely to head the U.S. delegation, having just been in the Qatari capital, Doha, on September 11 and 12 for the start of the Afghanistan peace conference.

The dialogue will overlap on September 15 with the White House signing ceremony hosted by President Trump between Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan. The simultaneous presence in the nation's capital of UAE and Qatari representatives who hold equal ministerial roles could tempt U.S. officials to apply diplomatic pressure to end the three-year rift between the two countries.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt broke off relations and cut communications and trading ties with Qatar in 2017, ostensibly out of frustration with Doha's support for terrorism and links with Iran. Although the group is usually referred to as being "Saudi led," the persistence of the dispute more likely lies in the personal enmity of Sheikh Abdullah's elder brother, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Zayed, toward Qatar.

U.S. diplomacy, principally concerned about the regional threat posed by Iran, has signalled considerable unease over the rift, particularly because Qatar is a willing host of 10,000 American service personnel, mainly at al-Udeid, the largest U.S. air base in the region. Despite initial comments from President Trump in 2017 appearing to take the side of Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, Washington shifted within weeks to a more neutral position, apparently doubting the stated reasons for the diplomatic break.

The first strategic dialogue with Qatar took place in Washington in January 2018, hosted jointly by then Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defence Secretary Jim Mattis. Two months later, Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met Trump in the

Oval Office to agree to a deal to buy thirty-six F-15s. In the second dialogue, in January 2019 in Doha, Pompeo referred to the “robust bilateral relationship.”

Ending the conflict appears to be an increasing priority for the administration. When President Trump spoke by phone with King Salman on September 6, he “urged Saudi Arabia to negotiate with other Gulf countries to resolve the rift.” And after a visit to Qatar in September, Assistant Secretary of State David Schenker was quoted as saying, “There’s not been a fundamental shift...but in our talks we’re detecting a little more flexibility.” Schenker also spoke of “high expectations for a productive dialogue” and said he had discussed “our excellent advanced counterterrorism cooperation.”

In the public sphere, the rift appears as great as ever, with Saudi and Emirati websites regularly publishing stories about alleged Qatari regional perfidy. Qatar itself has allowed its anarchic media to criticize the normalization agreement between the UAE and Israel, although Doha maintains discreet but close official contacts with Jerusalem, helping to reduce Israeli tensions with Hamas in Gaza by giving financial aid to Palestinian civilians and mediating ceasefires.

The near simultaneous events in Washington provide an opening for diminishing one set of headaches while celebrating the success of another diplomatic effort. The U.S. priority should be to reconstitute unity to deal with the malevolent intent of Iran.

Saudi Foreign Minister Sees End of Rift with Qatar

By Lina Zaidi
TCMER Board Member



Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud

Saudi Arabia's foreign minister signalled progress may be underway toward resolving the three-year-old rift with its neighbour Qatar, following a meeting in Washington with Secretary of State Michael Pompeo.

"We continue to be willing to engage with our Qatari brothers, and we hope that they are as committed to that engagement," Prince Faisal bin Farhan said in a virtual discussion hosted by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy on Thursday (Oct 15). "But we do need to address the legitimate security concerns of the quartet, and I think there is a path toward that" with a solution "in the relatively near future."

The rift in relations started in June 2017, when Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt abruptly severed diplomatic, trade and transport ties with Qatar, saying its government supported militant groups and had meddled in their internal affairs for years. Qatar has vehemently denied those claims. In June, Kuwait, a mediator between Qatar and its quartet of Gulf Arab neighbours, said there was progress toward resolving the standoff. Yet the crisis continues.

Prince Faisal visited Washington for a US-Saudi strategic dialogue at the State Department on Wednesday that included discussions about relations with Israel, the US's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran and the war in Yemen. The Trump administration has leaned on the Saudis to normalise relations with Israel, as the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain agreed to do.

But Prince Faisal said the focus should remain on Palestinian-Israeli peace talks before any formal rapprochement between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

He said Saudi Arabia isn't looking for conflict with Iran but argued that Trump's maximum pressure campaign is working, weakening the regime and depleting it of the resources needed to prop up its proxies in the region.

All those interested in how humans overcome adversity must read this book. Yasmine is one of the bravest people of our time. She is a shining example to all of us. -Ayaan Hirsi Ali

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YASMINE MOHAMMED