

Petro-Islam: The Nexus Between Oil and Terrorism

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Inquisitive observers of the Middle East's politics would naturally wonder that why do the Western powers prop up the Gulf's petro-monarchies, knowing fully well that they are the ones responsible for nurturing Islamic extremism. Does this not run counter to their professed goal of eliminating Islamic radicalism and terrorism?

Seemingly, the Western powers support the Gulf's autocrats because it has been a firm policy principle of the Western powers to promote "political stability" in the Middle East instead of representative democracy. They are mindful of the ground reality that the mainstream Muslim sentiment is firmly against any Western military presence and intervention in the Middle East region.

In addition, the Western policymakers also prefer to deal with small cliques of Middle Eastern strongmen rather than cultivating a complex and uncertain relationship on a popular level, certainly a myopic approach which is the hallmark of so-called pragmatic politicians and statesmen.

Left to their own resources, the Persian Gulf's petro-monarchies lack the manpower, the military technology and the moral authority to rule over forcefully suppressed and disenfranchised Arab masses, not only the Arab masses but also the South Asian and African immigrants of the Gulf states. One-third of the Saudi Arabian population is composed of immigrants. Similarly, more than 75% of UAE's population is also comprised of expats from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka.

The rest of the Gulf states, including Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman, also have a similar proportion of immigrant workers from the developing countries. Unlike the immigrants of the Western countries, however, who hold the citizenship status, the Gulf's immigrants have lived there for decades and sometimes for generations, and they are still regarded as unentitled foreigners.

Regarding the Western powers interest in propping up the Gulf's autocrats, it bears mentioning that in April 2016, the Saudi foreign minister [threatened](#) [1] that the Saudi kingdom would sell up to \$750 billion in treasury securities and other assets if the US Congress passed a bill that would allow Americans to sue the Saudi government in the United States courts for its role in the September 11, 2001 terror attack - though the bill was eventually passed, Saudi authorities have not been held accountable; even though 15 out of 19 9/11 hijackers were Saudi nationals.

Moreover, \$750 billion is only the Saudi investment in the United States, if we add its investment in the Western Europe and the investments of UAE, Kuwait and Qatar in the Western economies, the sum total would amount to trillions of dollars of Gulf's investments

in North America and Western Europe.

Furthermore, in order to bring home the significance of the Persian Gulf's oil in the energy-starved industrialized world, here are a few rough stats from the OPEC data: Saudi Arabia has the world's largest proven crude oil reserves of 265 billion barrels and its daily oil production exceeds 10 million barrels; Iran and Iraq, each, has 150 billion barrels reserves and has the capacity to produce 5 million barrels per day, each; while UAE and Kuwait, each, has 100 billion barrels reserves and produces 3 million barrels per day, each; thus, all the littoral states of the Persian Gulf, together, hold more than half of world's 1477 billion barrels of proven oil reserves.

No wonder then, 28,000 United States troops have currently been deployed in their numerous military bases and aircraft carriers in the oil-rich Persian Gulf in accordance with the Carter Doctrine of 1980, which states:

“Let our position be absolutely clear: an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”

Additionally, regarding the Western defense production industry's sales of arms to the Gulf Arab States, [a report](#) [2] authored by William Hartung of the US-based Center for International Policy found that the Obama administration had offered Saudi Arabia more than \$115 billion in weapons, military equipment and training during its eight-year tenure.

Similarly, the top items in Trump's agenda for his maiden visit to Saudi Arabia in May 2017 were: firstly, he threw his weight behind the idea of the Saudi-led “Arab NATO” to counter Iran's influence in the region; and secondly, he announced an unprecedented arms package for Saudi Arabia. The package included between \$98 billion and \$128 billion in arms sales, and over a period of 10 years, total sales could reach \$350 billion.

Therefore, keeping the economic dependence of the Western countries on the Gulf Arab States in mind during the times of global recession when most of manufacturing has been outsourced to China, it is not surprising that when the late King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia decided to provide training and arms to the Islamic jihadists in the border regions of Turkey and Jordan against the government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, the Obama administration was left with no other choice but to toe the destructive policy of its regional Middle Eastern allies, despite the sectarian nature of the proxy war and its attendant consequences of breeding a new generation of Islamic jihadists who would become a long-term security risk not only to the Middle East but to the Western countries, as well.

Similarly, when King Abdullah's successor King Salman decided, on the whim of the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, to invade Yemen in March 2015, once again the Obama administration had to yield to the dictates of Saudi Arabia and UAE by fully coordinating the Gulf-led military campaign in Yemen not only by providing intelligence, planning and logistical support but also by selling billions of dollars' worth of arms and ammunition to the Gulf Arab States during the conflict.

In this reciprocal relationship, the US provides security to the ruling families of the Gulf Arab states by providing weapons and troops; and in return, the Gulf's petro-sheikhs contribute

substantial investments to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars to the Western economies.

Regarding the Pax Americana which is the reality of the contemporary global political and economic order, according to a January 2017 [infographic](#) [3] by the New York Times, 210,000 US military personnel are currently stationed all over the world, including 79,000 in Europe, 45,000 in Japan, 28,500 in South Korea and 36,000 in the Middle East.

Although Donald Trump keeps complaining that NATO must share the cost of deployment of US troops, particularly in Europe where 47,000 American troops are stationed in Germany since the end of the Second World War, 15,000 in Italy and 8,000 in the United Kingdom, fact of the matter is that the cost is already shared between Washington and host countries.

Roughly, European countries pay one-third of the cost for maintaining US military bases in Europe whereas Washington chips in the remaining two-third. In the Far Eastern countries, 75% of the cost for the deployment of American troops is shared by Japan and the remaining 25% by Washington, and in South Korea, 40% cost is shared by the host country and the US chips in the remaining 60%.

Whereas the oil-rich Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) – Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait and Qatar – pay two-third of the cost for maintaining 28,000 US troops in the Persian Gulf where more than half of world’s proven oil reserves are located and Washington contributes the remaining one-third.

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Notes

[1] Saudi Arabia Warns of Economic Fallout if Congress Passes 9/11 Bill:

https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/16/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-warns-ofeconomic-fallout-if-congress-passes-9-11-bill.html?_r=0

[2] The Obama administration’s arms sales offers to Saudi top \$115 billion:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-saudi-security-idUSKCN11D2JQ>

[3] What the U.S. Gets for Defending Its Allies and Interests Abroad?

http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/16/world/trump-military-role-treaties-allies-nato-asia-persian-gulf.html?smid=tw-share&_r=0

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