

# What Is Trump's Middle East Doctrine and How China, Russia and Iran Are Dealing with It

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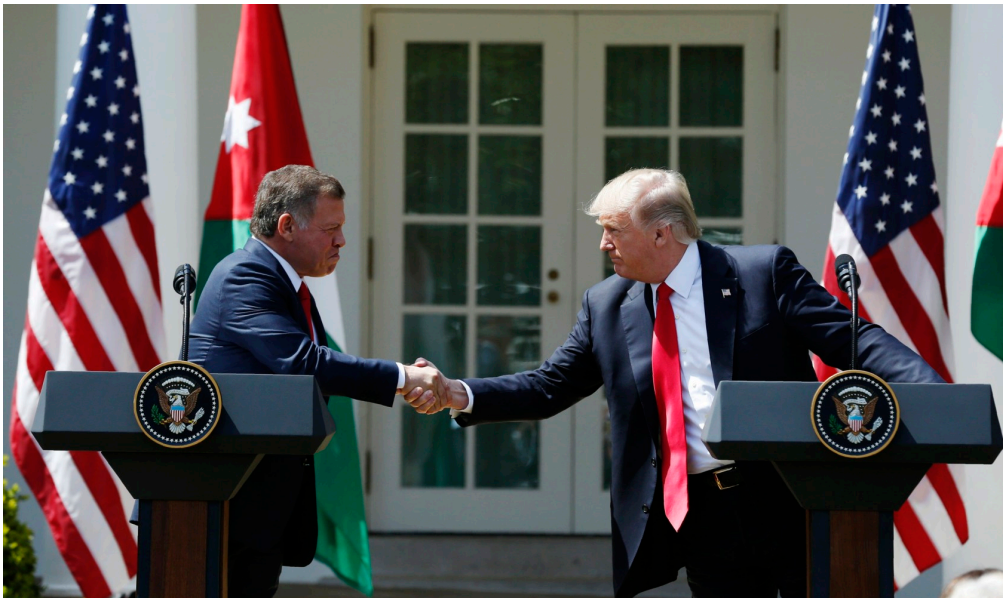
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*Donald Trump's first foreign visit has begun to define America's foreign-policy posture. After almost two years of words and rhetoric, Trump has begun to reverse his electoral promises with diametrically opposed actions. The most recent meetings with the King of Jordan and President Erdogan, in addition to the trips to Saudi Arabia and Israel, represent the foundations of a great alliance that seems to be directed towards halting the advance of the Shiite arc in the Middle East that is led by Iran and Syria (as well as Hezbollah) with the assistance of Russian military power and Chinese economic power.*

Over the past 30 days, Donald Trump has been able to meet with the most important allies of the United States in Middle East. First of all, [King Abdullah](#) of Jordan, and then [Erdogan](#) of Turkey, were received at the White House. Then Trump went on a trip numbering several days to Saudi Arabia and Israel. In each of these meetings, major points of friction between parties were discussed in an effort to find a shared outcome in the interest of everyone.

With Jordanian King Abdullah, the issue of the southern border between Syria and Jordan has been dealt with, and attempts are being made to influence the conflict, although there are few men and resources available. It would appear that Trump has agreed to [supply](#) the Jordanians with armored vehicles and trained proxies (FSA, but in reality anti-Assad militias recycled with other terrorist groups) with the intention of preventing the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) from [taking control](#) of the borders between Jordan, Iraq and Syria. In this sense, the town of [al-Tanf](#) is a good example of what the US and its allies want to avoid. Conquering the town would let Damascus link Baghdad to Iran, reactivating one of the major road-supply lines between Syria and Iran. This is precisely why the US and its proxy fighters decided to attack the SAA and bomb its convoy when it was approaching the town to reconquer it.



President Donald Trump greets Jordan's King Abdullah II during a joint news conference at the White House in Washington on April 5, 2017. (Source: Yuri Gripas / Reuters)

With Erdogan, the main thrust concerns the joint effort between Washington and the Kurds to conquer Raqqa, though the bigger issue for Washington is the hidden offensive to seal the eastern border with Iraq, thanks to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The problem remains that Trump and Erdogan seem to have [different ideas](#) about the role of the Kurds in the offensive in Syria. At the same time, Washington's notorious duplicity in its intention to fight terrorism shows that the offensive on Raqqa has intentionally left open two roads south of the city linking the capital of Daesh with Deir ez-Zor, a strategic city still partially controlled by Assad's troops. The intent, as in Mosul, is clearly to relocate terrorists to another city under Assad's control so as to continue the work of destroying Syria.

The tour in Saudi Arabia and Israel, in addition to the usual assurances concerning the sale of weapons — Trump has secured nearly [400 billion dollars](#) of sales to the Saudi kingdom — coincided with the new American project in Syria to directly or indirectly control all the country's borders. The goal is to seal the border to the south and southeast with Jordanian-led Free Syrian Army (FSA) troops, as well as seal the border in the north and northeast border with Iraq and Turkey through the SDF, or even alternatively, a mix of Turkish troops linked with the Nusra Front, as seems to have been the case with [Euphrates Shield](#). What remains is the western border, which is the most complicated to decipher. The southwest, bordering Jordan, is firmly in the hands of the SAA. The other is the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights a safe place for daesh and al-Qaeda terrorists. In the west, the Mediterranean laps on SAA-controlled land, as with the border with Lebanon. Finally, to the northwest, the border with Turkey is in the hands of terrorists funded by Ankara, currently halted by the agreements from [Astana](#), or in the hands of the Syrian Kurds allied with Damascus.

As one can easily see, the American objective in talks with regional allies is to find a common strategy that can guarantee a semblance of victory in Syria. With Assad's army pushing more and more against the terrorists, thanks to the forces freed by the Astana accords, it is easy to foresee that the Jordanian and Iraqi borders will be [attractive targets](#) for Damascus. The northern border, controlled in part by Turkey, is currently frozen in terms of movements and will be discussed in future negotiations; it is difficult to see any military effort to change the situation.

Trump's journey to the Middle East has thus had the goal of boosting the sale of weapons, the confidence in the US as an ally, and the organization of a strategy in Syria.



President Donald Trump and King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia sign a Joint Strategic Vision Statement for the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during ceremonies, Saturday, May 20, 2017, at the Royal Court Palace in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. (Official White House Photo Shealah Craighead)

The intention is to create an Arab NATO that can coordinate key events in the region more easily than can the current international coalition. The plan envisaged is essentially that of employing all resources available to prevent Assad from controlling the borders between Syria and Iraq and Syria and Jordan, effectively freezing the situation in Syria. Washington's desperate wish is to prevent a union between Syria, Iraq, Iran and Hezbollah, for such would spell the creation of a Shiite arch that is clearly opposed to Saudi Arabia, Israel, Qatar and Turkey.

It is likely that Trump, the Saudi's and Israel are looking to a strategy that could justify in the eyes of the Arab world an open cooperation between the Riyadh and Tel Aviv, something that could also earn points for Trump before the international community. The first thing on the list is a negotiation between Israel and Palestine in order to resolve this historical conflict. The point is that if this operation were to succeed, the divisions between Israel and a part of the Sunni world could be overcome in order for them to face their common enemy, which is of course Shiite Islam that is most prominently represented by Iran, Hezbollah and Syria.

If the strategy is to avoid the emergence of a Shiite arc dominated by Iran, the US has made clear that countries like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Israel and Jordan set aside their strategic differences regarding the future of the region in order to unite under an American leadership in the region. Trump's biggest incentive to negotiate a peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians is to be seen by the world as "the best negotiator ever", building his legacy. From the Saudi perspective, the resumption of a leading role by the United States is a welcome relief after the Obama presidency. Moreover, Riyadh's closeness to Beijing has generated some anxieties amongst US policy-makers, who see the role of the Saudi-controlled petrodollar and OPEC as the only way to continue to fuel their wars thanks to the economic hegemony of the dollar.

For Israel, this is a long-awaited shift of policy from Washington. Secret talks and meetings with Riyadh, with the common goal of limiting Iranian influence in the region, have been going on for years, and from their point of view, Washington is finally completely on board. Another aspect to consider is the role of Qatar, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood (very close to the Erdogan Turkish faction, as well as enjoying a presence in the former Obama administration through [Huma Abedin](#)) and the financial hand behind many Palestinian factions such as Hamas. Although the wounds between Riyadh and Doha were patched up after the Egyptian affair (Morsi was supported by Qatar, and el-Sisi received more or less indirect support from Riyadh) some outstanding issues remain, above all the competing ideological roles in the Middle East played by Wahhabism and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The intention of Washington and Riyadh, with the blessing of Tel Aviv, is to bring together all the opponents of Tehran and Damascus under a single banner renamed Arab NATO. In this

way, co-ordination between the parties to take control of the Syrian borders, the last option left to influence events in Syria, could be given a realistic shot.

The final strategy for Washington is as simple as it is difficult to implement, namely, to isolate Iran while preventing the emergence of a link between Iran and the Mediterranean, something that is connected to the export of gas and oil from Tehran to Europe, in sharp contrast to the [Qataris' plan](#) to export gas through Iraq and Syria in Europe. In addition to the energy corridors and the domination of the region, there is a much wider picture to consider.

Beijing intends to rebuild Syria at the end of the conflict, and the same intentions will likely extend to all those countries needing money and funding following years of war. The Chinese idea is to intervene economically to revitalize the region once the wars are over, something that will happen sooner or later. Moscow's leadership role from a military point of view continues to expand in co-operation with Iran and Egypt. In Syria we know of the massive Russian presence, but in Iraq there is coordination with Moscow in terms of information sharing, and the same with Egypt in Libya. Russian armaments and specialists are at the disposal of these countries for the purposes of defeating terrorism, but also as a means of expanding the Russian presence in the Middle East and North Africa.

Summing up these situations, it is easy to imagine how Iran intends to drive the Shiite arc in the Middle East, with guaranteed economic support from Beijing and a military umbrella courtesy of Moscow, consolidating a region that has been living in chaos for decades.

Beijing, Moscow and Tehran are faced with the ultimate challenge of resisting the foreign intervention of powers aligned with the United States by ending the Syrian quagmire through diplomatic and military efforts. If this operation can be accomplished in a relatively short period of time, it may be that neocon-Israeli-Wahhabi efforts will vanish into nothing.

Syria, as well as the whole of the Shiite arc, is destined to dominate the region thanks to industrial development and security, something that currently seems unachievable but ultimately will be the norm. Beijing and Moscow are aware that in order to achieve a full integration of the Eurasian continent with its Middle-Eastern, Persian and North African neighbors, something is needed beyond territorial problems like in Syria or Libya. The region needs a wide-ranging project that can revive countries where poverty abounds, where the average age is very low, and where there is a lack of education. These factors are primary ingredients for the recruitment of extremist terrorism.

Tehran, Beijing, and Moscow are struggling to extirpate the seeds of hatred from the region in order to give a radiant future not only to their peoples, but to all nations that want to be part of a new world order based on mutual respect and dialogue, not imposition and strength.



Russian President Vladimir Putin (L), Chinese President Xi Jinping (C) and Iran's President Hassan Rouhani attend the Expo Center before the opening ceremony at the Expo Center at the fourth Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) summit in Shanghai on May 21, 2014 (Source: AFP 2017/ ALY SONG / POOL)

The dollar is the symbol of the financial domain that feeds the Western war machine. The Arab NATO is the latest attempt by a number of countries to stop the inevitable in Syria and

the Middle East. It is no coincidence that Riyadh focuses on two very different scenarios. The approximation between Beijing and Riyadh is a factor underestimated in the West, just as is Moscow's fruitful dialogue between Turkey and Israel. While Ankara, Tel Aviv and Riyadh are central to Washington's strategy, these contacts with Beijing and Moscow indicate that even amongst the sworn opponents of Tehran and Damascus, there is lack of confidence that the plan elaborated by the Israelis, Neocons and Wahhabis may succeed.

Once US efforts in the Middle East and North Africa eventually fail, it is likely that the dollar's role will also begin to be affected by a diversification towards non-dollar-based sales of oil. The reality that Washington faces is much more complex and negative than it does not seem. If the Shiite arc really succeeds in dominating the region, with Beijing's economic protection (linked to One Belt One Road and the Maritime Silk Road, as well as institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank), Washington will be unable to hold back even her closest allies, who are already eager to talk with their Russians and Chinese counterparts.

The deep state in Washington, and Trump to a lesser extent (he is interested in creating a legacy based on the solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict), realized that a last attempt was to be made in Syria with the takeover of Raqqa and the conquest of the borders between Syria and Iraq and Syria and Jordan. All future projects of the Wahhabi-neocon-Israeli alliance depend on the military success of these operations.

If Assad will be able to secure his country by defending its borders, the Shiite arc will finally come to life and at that point it will only be a matter of time before Beijing can inject money into the country's economy to stabilize it while Moscow continues its security work in the region targeting extremists in Libya, Egypt and Iraq.

There is a ruthless struggle in various areas of the Middle East and North Africa on which the future of millions of people will depend. A victory for Assad and Syria today is a defeat for the American-Israeli-Saudi war machine and a triumph for the future the evolving multipolar world.

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