

The Israeli-Saudi Alliance

Does it go deeper than a mutual antipathy to Iran?

by Justin Raimondo, June 08, 2015

Suddenly the news of a Saudi-Israeli-Gulf states alliance is all over the news, and we're shocked – shocked! – that such strange bedfellows have been found in bed together. Readers of Antiwar.com, however, are neither shocked nor surprised, since that breaking news broke here months if not years ago. (Thanks to Chelsea Manning, WikiLeaks published a diplomatic cable revealing the covert Israeli-Gulf states flirtation some time ago.) Now it appears that the relationship is coming out of the closet, so to speak, as the war drums in the Middle East grow louder. As I wrote in April, in a piece on the Saudi invasion of Yemen:

“[W]e are committed to giving unconditional support to Riyadh the same way we've been giving unquestioning allegiance to Israel – which, by the way, is hovering in the background, stoking the inter-Muslim conflict and undermining US interests at every turn.

“The idea that we have any allies in the Middle East is laughable – and, yes, that includes Israel. It's one big snake pit, with the biggest serpents professing their eternal friendship with Washington – while biting us on the ankles when they can. What we are faced with now is a Saudi-Gulf states-Israeli alliance intent on war with Iran – with the United States directly in the crossfire.”

United by their interest in ginning up a US-led war with Iran, these two seemingly disparate – indeed, supposedly polar opposite – countries aren't as diametrically opposed as appears on the surface. There is much to indicate that, far from being a mere alliance of convenience, one which is contingent on their shared albeit temporary interests, this conjoining has a more substantial basis.

Israel, like the Kingdom, is essentially a sectarian theocracy. Although adorned with the trappings of democracy, the Jewish state bases its legitimacy on its religious character, that is, as a sanctuary for world Jewry. This, in turn, is based on historical claims reaching back thousands of years, which imbues the land of Israel with a mystical significance and legitimizes Israeli sovereignty (at least in the eyes of its Jewish citizens).

The Kingdom is also a sectarian theocracy, one that severely punishes adherents of all other faiths and actively seeks to suppress them. Just as Israel sees itself as the seat of the Jewish faith, so the Saudis claim the same status as the official arbiters of global Islam: and this, too, is based on historical claims, i.e. the status of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina as the twin loci and geographical epicenter of the Muslim faith. And while Israeli repression of non-Jewish populations is relatively mild, at least compared to the Saudis, in principle their policies are identical, based as they both are on a presumption of theological supremacism.

And while the Israeli version of this sectarianism is less extreme, Tel Aviv is rapidly moving toward a Jewish version of Wahabism. This takes the form of an increasingly influential fundamentalist ultra-nationalism of the sort denounced by the great Israeli libertarian

Yeshayahu Leibowitz, who provoked ire among his countrymen by declaring that “Religious nationalism is to religion what national socialism is to socialism.” It was Leibowitz who foresaw, with stunning prescience, that if Israel continued to occupy the lands it took in the 1967 war it would evolve into a tyranny. That the most right-wing government in the country’s history is now joining hands with the Saudis would hardly come as a surprise to him.

Another essential similarity between the Saudis and the Israelis is their structural dependence on the US, and a concomitant reliance on high-powered lobbying in order to achieve their foreign policy goals. As John Glaser noted on this web site some months ago, the memoir of former Defense Secretary Robert Gates underscores the dangers of our entangling alliance with both countries: Glaser cites the WikiLeaks cable, which explicitly refers to the Saudi-Gulf states methodology of relaying their concerns through Israel’s powerful amen corner in the US. And of course the Saudis and their Gulf mini-me’s have their own Washington lobbies, which have plenty of money to throw around.

Indeed, out of all the many alliances and client-state relationships that constitute the operational basis of the American empire, it is our intimate relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia that stand out as the twin pillars of the entire system. Without these two client states, US global hegemony would be more of an affectation than a presumption or an accomplished fact. That they are now turning against their protector and benefactor, as the prospect of a rapprochement with Iran presents itself as a possibility, portends an ill wind blowing — and not only in the Middle East.

Finally, one wonders about the history of the Israeli-Saudi alliance. Its provenance, we are told, is of relatively recent vintage. But how far back does it really go? The alleged menace of Iran is said to bring these two theocracies into strategic alignment, but there is some evidence that is not the whole of it.

In December of 2002, Congress released the report of the Joint Inquiry Into Intelligence Community Activities Before and After the Terrorist Attack of September 11, 2001. This is not the 9/11 Commission Report, but rather a collaboration between the House and Senate intelligence committees, which reported on the activities not only of our own intelligence agencies but also actions undertaken by foreign actors. And while the report freely described the activities of the former, those of the latter were censored, for the most part. Most of an entire section, “Finding, Discussion and Narrative Regarding Certain National Security Matters,” beginning on page 395, was redacted.

The general public is not allowed to know what’s in those 28 redacted pages, but members of Congress are allowed to read them under certain conditions. They must make a request, which may or may not be granted: then they must read it in a secure room, in the company of intelligence officials, and are not allowed to take notes. They are sworn to secrecy, but several who have read the 28 pages have come out of that room clearly implying that the evidence points to the Saudis as active participants in the plot to take down the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Former Sen. Bob Graham has been particularly outspoken in drawing this conclusion. But it isn’t just the Saudis who have been implicated.

The introduction to the redacted pages refers to “foreign sources of support for some of the September 11 hijackers” – i.e. more than a single source. And of those that have read the censored pages, the statement by Rep. Tom Massie (R-Kentucky), jumps out at me:

"I had to stop every two or three pages and rearrange my perception of history. And it's that fundamental – those 28 pages....It certainly changes your view of the Middle East."

It's a curious statement: why would Saudi involvement in the 9/11 attacks rearrange one's perception of history? After all, fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were citizens of the Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia, aside from being Osama bin Laden's birthplace, is the epicenter of the Sunni fundamentalist theology that motivates Al Qaeda.

The statement of Rep. Walter B. Jones (R-North Carolina) is even more revealing:

"I was absolutely shocked by what I read. What was so surprising was that those whom we thought we could trust really disappointed me...It does not deal with national security per se; it is more about relationships. The information is critical to our foreign policy moving forward and should thus be available to the American people. If the 9/11 hijackers had outside help – particularly from one or more foreign governments – the press and the public have a right to know what our government has or has not done to bring justice to the perpetrators."

“One or more foreign governments”?

Aside from the Saudis, whose involvement would hardly be shocking, what other foreign government is implicated as having at least some foreknowledge of the 9/11 terrorist attacks?

In December, 2001, when every news organization was following leads on the circumstances surrounding 9/11, Fox News – the most pro-Israel of all media outlets – ran a series of reports by Carl Cameron maintaining that Israel's intelligence community had foreknowledge of the attacks, but somehow neglected to warn us. It was a four-part series – see part 1, part 2, part 3, and part 4 – and the first report was opened by Cameron with this stunning statement:

"Since September 11, more than 60 Israelis have been arrested or detained, either under the new patriot anti-terrorism law, or for immigration violations. A handful of active Israeli military were among those detained, according to investigators, who say some of the detainees also failed polygraph questions when asked about alleged surveillance activities against and in the United States.

"There is no indication that the Israelis were involved in the 9-11 attacks, but investigators suspect that the Israelis may have gathered intelligence about the attacks in advance, and not shared it. A highly placed investigator said there are 'tie-ins.' But when asked for details, he flatly refused to describe them, saying, 'evidence linking these Israelis to 9-11 is classified. I cannot tell you about evidence that has been gathered. It's classified information.'"

The gist of the series was that Israel has maintained an extensive spy network in the United States, and that this network – preoccupied with monitoring Islamist agents in the US – followed the hijackers' activities while they were in this country very closely. Subsequent reporting in other media, notably Die Zeit, Salon, and Le Monde, indicated that the Israelis were not only monitoring but also aiding the hijackers by forming a kind of protective bubble around them.

Now that is certainly reason enough to “rearrange” one's “perception of history.”

Did the Saudis and the Israelis, working in tandem, facilitate the 9/11 terrorist attacks? We don't know the answer to that question, since the 28 censored pages are being withheld from the American public. Yet what we do know certainly points in that direction – and gives us a glimpse of what may well be the darkest chapter in the hidden history of the Israeli-Saudi alliance.

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