

The Geopolitics of Energy & Terrorism

Part 8

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Introduction

The following chapters are independent essays written in April and May 2016, and they can be read in any order.

The wars for the global resources of oil and natural gas are the topic of most essays. To a large extent, the wars of the 20th and 21st centuries were the result of energy rich countries competing to secure their exports, or the result of energy poor countries competing to secure their access to energy resources.

Many episodes of the energy wars of the 20th and 21st centuries are described in the following essays.

I.A.

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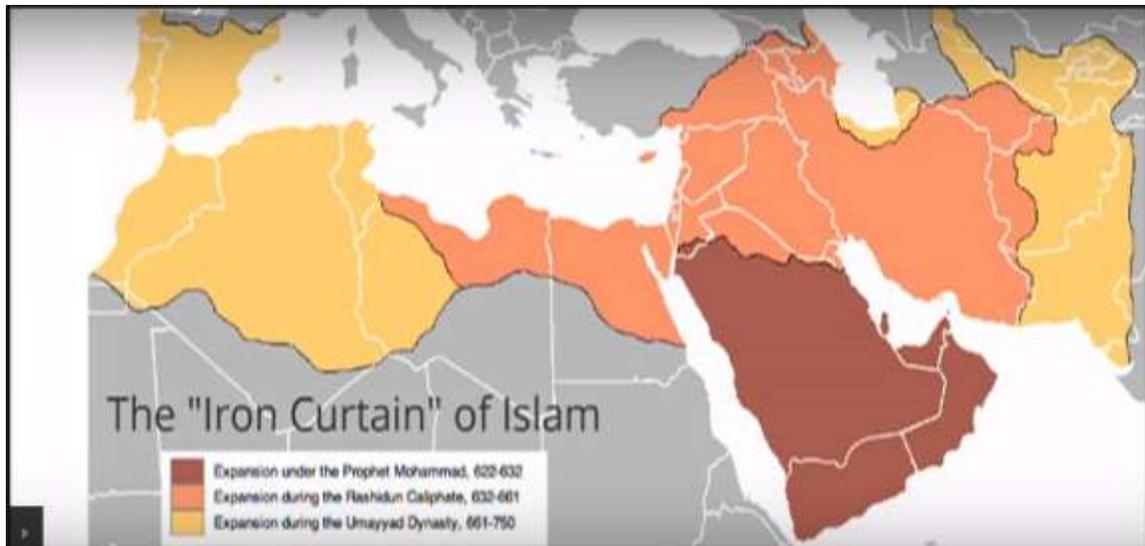
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The Islamic Iron Curtain of the 7th Century

Prophet Muhammad was the founder of Islam. For the Muslim people Prophet Muhammad was the man who was sent by God to spread Islam on earth. Muhammad was a merchant. See Wikipedia link below. Muhammad was a righteous man, and his prices were that fair, that no further bargaining was required between the seller and the buyer. Remember that bargaining was an essential part of trade in the Muslim world.

Muhammad was born on 570 C.E. and he is the man who united the Arab world. In the period 600-700 C.E. an Islamic Iron Curtain was created, which no longer allowed the infidels i.e. the Christians, to trade through the Silk Roads. From now on the infidels would have to stop at Egypt, and purchase from the Muslim traders the merchandises of East Asia i.e. spices, silk etc. Before Muhammed and Islam the Romans could freely travel through the Silk Roads. After the Islamic Iron Curtain the Indian Ocean became an Islamic Sea.

Map 1



During the 20th century Gamal Nasser, the Egyptian leader, wanted to unite Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the Arabic countries of the Persian Gulf to a single Arabic country, with him as its leader. Muammar Qaddafi of Libya wanted to unite Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya in a single Arabic country too.

Map 2



Muhammad used Islam to unite the people of the Arab World. Gamal Nasser and Muammar Qaddafi mainly used Arab nationalism and socialism to unite the Arab World against the “greedy” capitalists/imperialists of the West. It was no longer a battle between Muslims and Christians, between Muslims and infidels, but a battle between Arab socialists against Western capitalists/imperialists.

Erdogan, Turkey’s President, is using today the Islamic socialist model of the Muslim Brotherhood to unite the Muslim World. Erdogan’s path resembles more to the path followed by Prophet Muhammad.

You can call it Islam against the infidels, you can call it socialists against capitalists, but I prefer to call it the war for the Silk Roads.

“Muhammad”

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad>

For more information see “A Brief Introduction of International Trade” by Ryan Petersen.

Pan-Arabism VS Pan-Islamism

Pan-Arabism i.e. Arabism and Socialism, is the ideology that was used by the Egyptian socialist dictator Gamal Nasser, the Libyan socialist dictator Muammar Gaddafi, and other pro-Soviet socialist dictators of the Arab World, in order to attack the Arab and Persian Kings of the Persian Gulf i.e. the Saudi Family, the Shah of Iran etc. The main idea of Pan-Arabism, besides its socialist economic model, is for the Arab people to unite, in order to act more efficiently as an international oil cartel, and synchronize (reduce) their production, in order to sell oil at higher prices to United States, Europe and China i.e. “save our oil for our children”.

Map 1



Map 2 The Arab World



<http://martinsidwell.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Arab-World-Map.jpg>

Pan-Islamism on the other hand does not separate Muslims to Arabs and non-Arabs, or to Sunnis and Shias etc. Pan-Islamism wants all Muslims to unite in order to form an efficient oil cartel. The commercial ambitions of Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism are the same, but Pan-Islamism involves a much larger oil cartel than Pan-Arabism.

Map 3



Map 4



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:World_Muslim_Population_Map.png

Remember that when Nasser was using Pan-Arabism in the 60s and 70s, except of attacking the Saudis, he also wanted to attack the Iranians, who were cooperating with Israel, and were exporting oil through the Eilat-

Ashkelon pipeline, thus avoiding the Suez Canal which was controlled by the Arabs of Egypt.

Today Erdogan is using Pan-Islamism, because Turkey does not have oil and natural gas, but she has the strongest army of the Muslim World, due to her alliance with NATO during the last decades. The Islamists of Turkey want to export to Europe the oil and natural gas of both the Arabs and the Persians (Iranians), but also of the Muslim countries of Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan).

The Saudis were also using some form of Pan-Islamism, in order to attack Gamal Nasser, who was using Pan-Arabism in order to get hold of the oil of the Persian Gulf. In the 50s and 60s, with the use of Pan-Arabism, Gamal Nasser was doing to the Saudis what Erdogan is doing to them in the 21st Century, by using Pan-Islamism.

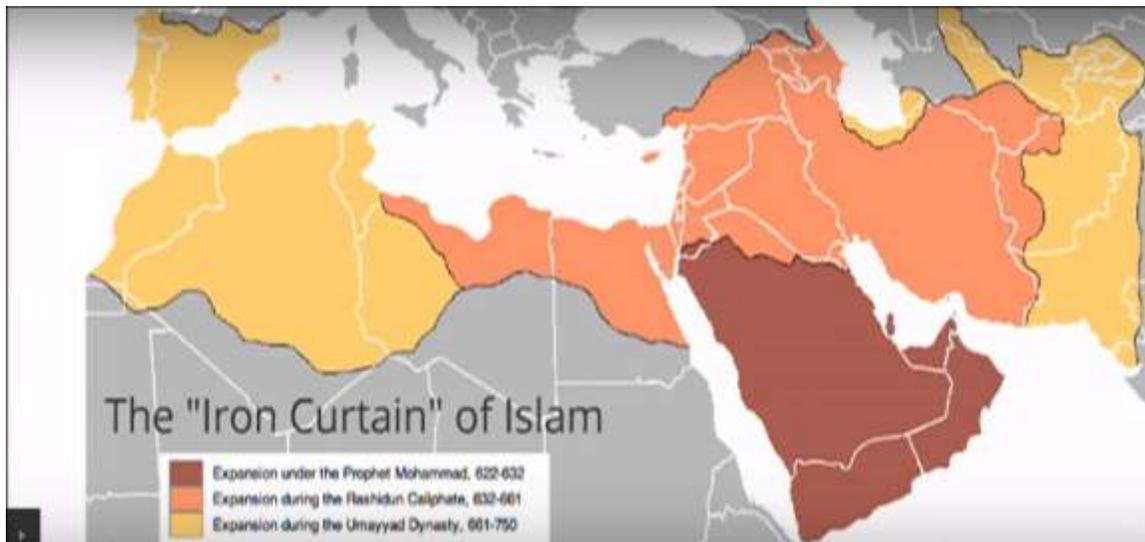
The Saudis of course are not using socialism as a part of their Pan-Islamic ideology, because they have Kings. The main advantage of the Saudis is their oil revenue, which allows them to make very large contributions to the other Arab countries, in exchange for their support. Gamal Nasser could always promise more than the Saudi King, because promises are always easier to find than actual money. Gamal Nasser also had the support of members of the Saud family who were enemies of the King.

The other advantage of the Saudis is that the Holy cities of Islam i.e. Mecca and Medina, are located in Saudi Arabia. Prophet Muhammad was born in Mecca and died in Medina, and the Muslim people believe that it was in

Mecca that Allah gave the Koran to Muhammad. The Saud family believes that they are the natural leaders of the Islamic World, because during the previous centuries it was their ancestors who were leading the revolts against the Ottoman Empire at the Arabian Peninsula. The Sauds consider themselves to be true seeds of Prophet Muhammad, because Muhammad was born in their land.

Prophet Muhammad was a very honest merchant, and he is the father of Islam. With Islam, the people of the Middle East were able to unite during the 7th century C.E., and they managed to block the “infidels” (Christians) from the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. After the rise of Islam the Christians had to buy the goods of Asia i.e. spices, silk etc, at much higher prices from the Muslim merchants of the Mediterranean Sea, because they were no longer allowed to use the Silk Roads themselves.

Map The Islamic Iron Curtain



After the rise of Islam, the Islamic World was able to control international commerce, and that lasted until around 1500 C.E., when the Christians conquered the oceans, and found alternative routes to Asia i.e. around Africa and through the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The Christians also discovered the New World i.e. the American Continent. From 1500 the importance of the Middle East and the Islamic World started decreasing, and it became again of extreme importance in the 20th Century, due to its very rich oil reserves.

What is important is that Nasser's Pan-Arabism and Erdogan's Pan-Islamism follow the legacy of Prophet Muhammad, except that every Muslim leader is using the legacy of the Prophet in his own way.

As I said the Saudi Pan-Islamism does not include socialism, and it is based on the fact that the Saud family was the head of the revolutions against the Ottomans in the Arabian Peninsula, and also in their belief that they are true seeds of the Prophet himself.

Erdogan's Pan-Islamism is the Muslim Brotherhood's version, and it involves a Socialist Islamic Union, which would remind the Soviet Union, except that religion would play a major role, while it was almost banned in the Soviet Union. The Russian Communists wanted to assimilate their Muslim colonies i.e. Central Asia etc, and they almost banned religion.

Erdogan would not be the King of the Socialist Islamic Union he is dreaming of, like the Saudi case, but neither he would be the General

Secretary, as it was the case in the Soviet Union. Erdogan would be the Sultan or the Caliphate of this Socialist Islamic Union.

You should not see Erdogan as a crazy man, because it does not mean that he has to unite the whole Muslim World in a Socialist Islamic Union in order to be successful. In politics it is not all or nothing. Erdogan has already managed to “convince” the Saudis to pay Turkey billions of dollars, and he has managed to convince the Qataris to invite Turkey to establish a military base in Qatar, in order to protect Qatar from Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The Qataris not only are more obedient than the Saudis to the Turks, but they also pay them billions of dollars, and they hope that they will manage with Turkey to construct the Qatar-Turkey Pipeline. The Turks and the Qataris see positively the inclusion of Iran in this pipeline, because Iran and Qatar share the largest gas field in the world i.e. the South Pars/North Fields. The Saudis on the other hand are not as rich as the Iranians and the Qataris in natural gas, and they consume internally their gas production, in order not to have more troubles with Russia. The Saudis and the Russians are the two largest oil exporters.

Saudi Arabia and Russia are able to discuss, because Saudi Arabia mainly exports oil to Asia, and Russia mainly exports oil to Europe, and Saudi Arabia does not export natural gas. Therefore there is some room for cooperation between the Saudi and the Russians, given of course that Russia would protect the Saudis from the Turks and the Iranians.

However after the death of King Abdullah and the rise of King Salman to power in January 2015, the Saudis and the Turks have reached an agreement, and they are allies again. But the Turks do not even want the Arab League to operate under the leadership of Saudi Arabia, with the argument that Arabs are not different than Muslims. The Turks want Saudi Arabia to completely surrender herself to Turkey's leadership. So we have to wait and see if the Saudi-Turkey alliance will last. Remember that the Saudis were leading the revolts against the Ottomans many centuries ago.

From Erdogan's point of view, if he manages to put under Turkish influence all the regions controlled by Turkey before the First World War (1914-1918), he would still be able to control the oil and natural gas pipelines, but also the trade routes of the New Silk Roads that will connect Asia to Europe after the rise of China.

Map 5 The Ottoman Empire Before WW1



http://images.mentalfloss.com/sites/default/files/styles/insert_main_wide_image/public/ottoman_empire_territory_lost_copy_copy.jpg

P.S.

I said that the Saudis, like the Turks, have also promoted a Pan-Islamic model, but that's not accurate, because Saudi Arabia promoted the idea of a united Islamic World under her leadership, but she did not include Iran in this Union. The Saudi model referred a Sunni Islamic Union.

Erdogan on the other hand promotes a true Pan-Islamic model, because he wants to send to Europe the oil and gas of Iran, but also of Iraq and Azerbaijan, which are also Shia countries, and Erdogan wants Turkey to be in good terms with the Shia World too.

See also “The Islamic Iron Curtain of the 7th Century

<https://iakal.wordpress.com/2016/04/26/the-islamic-iron-curtain-of-the-7th-century/>

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