

Middle East Features: Battle against ISIS and the Feud between Iran and Saudi Arabia

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Combating ISIS and AQ at All Fronts

- ISIS/ISIL hot spots

- Syria & Iraq
- Libya
- Afghanistan



- AQ battle zones

- Syria
- Yemen
- Libya & Tunisia
- Somalia
- Nigeria, Mali & Burkina Faso

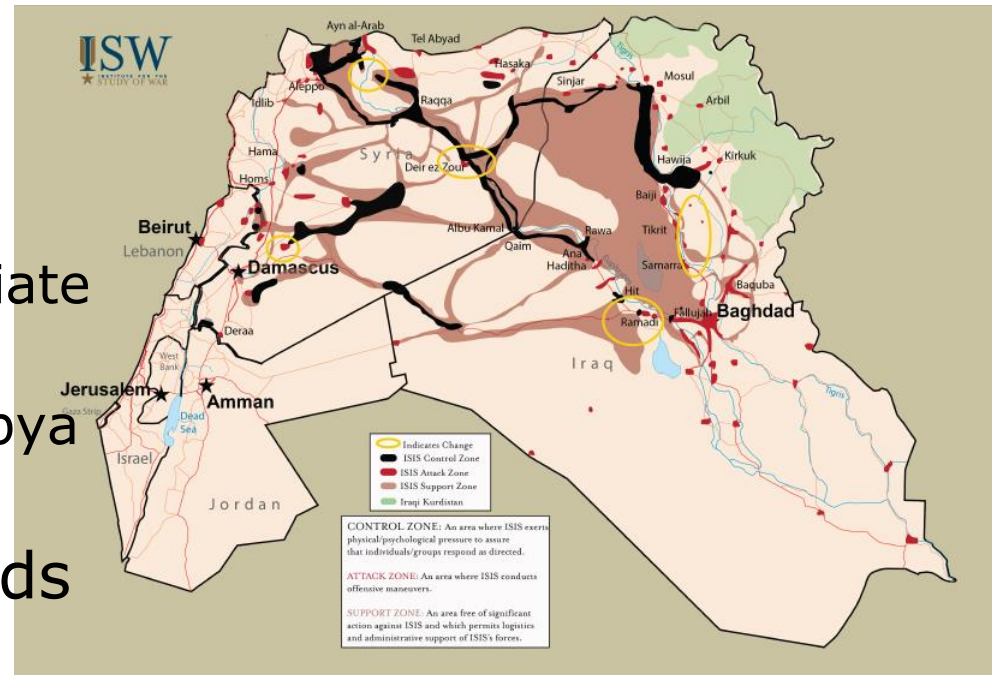


- 'Inspired by' terrorism, or franchised attacks

- US, France & Belgium
- Indonesia

Who's Winning? The Coalition? ISIS?

- The Coalition forces' non-irreversible gains and victories
 - Battle over Ramadi in Anbar Province
 - Liberated areas in Salahuddin Province
- Apparent changes of ISIS/ISIL strategy
 - Prioritizing 'distant enemies' over 'immediate enemies'?
 - Shifting its focus to Libya in recent months
- Adopting AQ's methods
 - Oil-related facilities as permissible targets to attack and destroy



Who's thy enemy?

Location	Who says so	Enemies and/or terrorist organizations
Syria	Russia, IRI and Hizballah	All and every opposition to Bashar al-Assad, including ISIS/ISIL and al-Nusra Front
	Turkey, KSA et al	Bashar al-Assad, Kurds, IRI, Hizballah, Russia, ISIS/ISIL et al
	US and EU	Everybody except "moderate forces"
Libya	UN, Egypt and UAE	Everybody except the Tobruk government
	Muslim Brotherhood, Qatar and Turkey	Everybody except Libya's Dawn forces
Yemen	KSA, UAE, Jordan et al	Houthi rebels, IRI, Hizballah, Ali Abdullah Saleh, AQAP
	IRI	Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and all foreign forces in support of Hadi, AQAP
	UN	Houthi rebels, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and all those supplying them, AQAP

⇒ lack of coherence and non-convergence on views

Differences between IRI and KSA

Islamic Republic of Iran	Contending issues	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Shia	Sects	Sunni
Persian	Linguistic groups	Arabic
Supporting Assad	Syria	Supporting anti-Assad groups
Supplying Houthi rebels	Yemen	Militarily intervening in support of the transitional government
Supports Hizballah	Lebanon	Supports anti-Hizballah camp
In close contact with the government	Iraq	Marginalizing the government
Concerted action with the West	Nuclear agreement	Distrust towards the West
AQ and ISIS/ISIL	Terrorist threats	Hizballah

Iran's Alleged Hegemonic Activities

- Territorial dispute
 - Pan-Shiite movement
 - Quest for Persian (Iranian) superiority and dominance
 - Undermining security and stability of Arab states
- Hegemony
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"Export of Revolution"

Iranian Power Projection

- “Export of Revolution”
 - Mantra of the revolutionary days and 1980s
 - A mere rhetoric in today’s regional politics
- Military power
 - IRGC Ground Force: 125,000 personnel
 - Basij Resistance Force: 350,000 personnel
- Ballistic missile capabilities
 - Extension of ranges and concerns of unconventional warheads
- Surrogates and clients in the region
 - Hizballah of Lebanon
 - Infiltration through Shiite communities in Arab states

Iran's Shadows Loom over KSA

- "Hizballah of Hijaz"
 - Al-Khobar Towers incident ('96)
 - Designation as a terrorist entity by KSA ('04)
- Infiltration by Hizballah into Iraq
 - From Lebanon, to a threat across the immediate border
- Quasi-Iranian presence in southern Iraq
 - Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq and its relationship with IRGC
 - Working relationship between Qais al-Khaz'ali and Qassem Soleimani
- Spread of "Arab Spring" into Bahrain
 - Wefaq Party and anti-government Shiite rallies
- And now, Yemen
 - Threats from the backyard

Bab al-Mandeb: Another Choke Point

- **Djibouti, Sudan, and Somalia** following KSA's lead
 - States that have very few interests in Iran
 - High dependency on KSA's financial assistance
 - OIC's Extraordinary Foreign Ministers Meeting and its Communique
 - States that Iran is alleged of interfering in
 - Bahrain
 - Syria
 - Yemen
 - Somalia
- ⇒ Commonalities: littoral states to the Red Sea and the Strait of **Bab al-Mandeb**

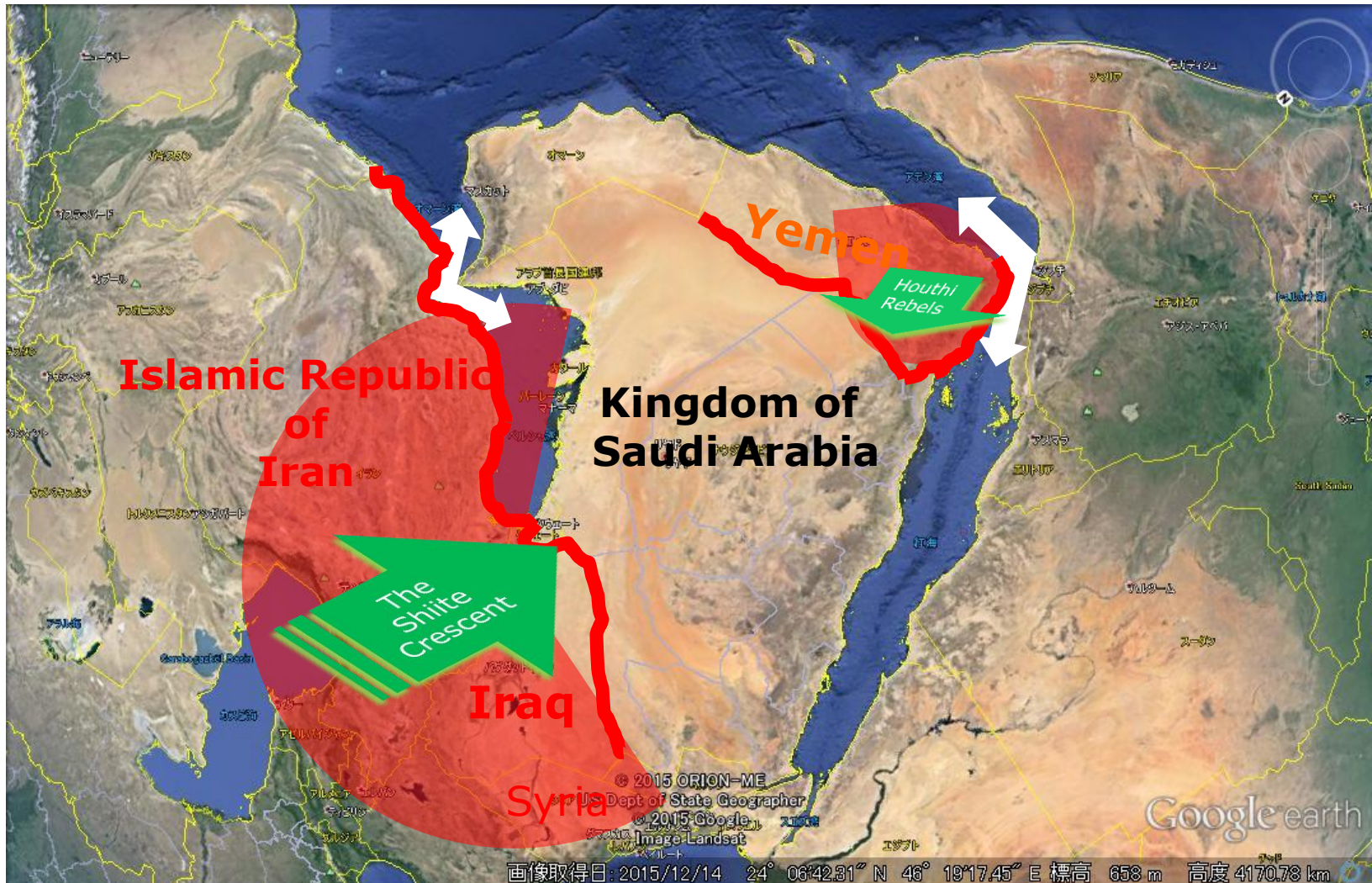
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Winning the war in Syria	Strategic priority	Winning the war in Yemen
United States of America	Security threat	Islamic Republic of Iran

(theoretical) KSA's Threat Perceptions



(theoretical) KSA's Threat Perceptions



(theoretical) KSA's Grand Design

Policy and events	Targets and intended effects	Tools
Bonus awards for the people	Loyalty of the nation Nurturing patriotism	Vast oil revenue
Lower oil prices	IRI, Russia, Shale producers	Over production of oil Disunity of OPEC
Containment of Shiites and IRI	Awamiyah (Eastern Province), Bahrain, Iraq, Hizballah	Anti-terrorism measures Rejection of interference
Military intervention in Yemen	Houthi rebels (supported by IRI), Ali Abdullah Saleh, AQAP	National security matters 'Being a good Muslim'
Military intervention in Syria	Bashar al-Assad, IRI, Russia, Kurdish fighters, ISIS/ISIL, Jabhat al-Nusra	Solidarity with Syrians Religious duty
Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism	ISIS/ISIL, AQ and its subgroups, Hizballah, Bashar al-Assad, Iraq, IRI	Financial assistance Terrorist threats, concern of Shiite (IRI) influence
Subsidy reform	Financial balance, oil resistant economy	Sense of emergency Religious morality

⇒ apparent structural interdependence of policies; its advantages and disadvantages at the same time

Implications of the Recent Feud

- Negative impact on regional security and stability
 - Prolongation of **civil wars**
 - **Invigoration of terrorist organizations**
- Consolidation of a “Gulf Cold War” structure
 - **KSA’s total distrust** of the Iranian regime
 - **Questioning the legitimacy** of the House of Saud
 - Intensification of discord over OPEC policies
⇒ **continuation of over supply**
- Continuous tension and escalation of rivalry
 - Conventional **arms race**
 - Adherence to a **‘nuclear option’**