

Saudi Arabia v Iran – Which Should The West Support?

By **Alexander Baron** - Jan 19, 2016



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While the usual suspects are peddling their garbage about the Islamic conspiracy taking over Europe, Middle East watchers might just have noticed that Iran and Saudi Arabia have been at each others' throats for some considerable time, and with the execution by the Saudis of **47 people recently**, including a leading Shia cleric, relations between the two have reached an all time low. While outright war is unlikely, the big question is what should the West do? One thing would be to stand out of the way, hope they do go to war and slaughter each other, but that would be bad for us as well as for them. On the other hand, interference is not necessarily a good thing, especially now Obama has done the virtually impossible by bringing Iran in from the cold. First we have to understand what is really going on.

Like Iran, Saudi Arabia is an Islamic theocracy, but that is where the similarities end. After the overthrow of the Shah and the bloodletting of the 1979 revolution, Iran has not reverted to the Stone Age but has taken its people into the Twenty-First Century. While alcohol is banned and dress codes especially for women are somewhat different

from the West, the country does not lag behind in many fields. Women now make up the majority of university students, and unlike in the West where they tend to graduate in gender studies and other non-subjects, Iranian women study engineering and stem fields.

The position of especially women in Saudi Arabia is very different; they have only recently been given the vote, and the public dress codes are something else. The really big issue though is not its extreme form of Sharia but the fact that Saudi Arabia is also an absolute monarchy. This is not popular with many Moslems who allude to its rulers as the Saudi dictators. Saudi Arabia is also the home of two of the **holiest places in Islam**; the Saudis take their task as guardians of Mecca and Medinah extremely seriously, including of course the annual Hajj.

Both countries are said by some to enforce gender apartheid. In view of the antics of some of the **female lunatics** on the campuses of America, this may not be such a bad thing for their men!

Saudi Arabia may have a terrible reputation as far as human rights, but if the country were so bad, this begs the question why does it have such a massive non-indigenous population? Around a third of those domiciled there are expatriates and overseas workers from many countries, and because of the Draconian penalties enacted under its Sharia code, serious crimes are rare. As one Englishman wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* in 1997: “Why was it that, within six months of returning to a ‘civilised’ country, I was threatened at a local bus stop by a gang of youths? Why is it that, as a law abiding citizen, I would fear for my life walking around the back streets of London? Why was it that, when I lived in an ‘uncivilised’ country for six years, there was not one single occasion when I was remotely threatened by anyone? Why was I able to walk around the back streets of Riyadh without a worry in the world?”

Although the Saudis may be loathed by a substantial percentage of the Islamic world, the Saudi dynasty has been a good friend and ally to the West, a friendship that transcends mere financial and geopolitical considerations, but we do our friends no favours when we fail to criticise and try to correct their obvious mistakes.

The latest diplomatic effort to heal the rift between the two countries has come not from the West but from the two top men in Pakistan: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and General Raheel Sharif who are meeting with both the King of Saudi Arabia and President Rouhani of Iran. If the two nations do not listen to fellow Moslems, then there is little chance of them listening to the Great Satan.

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