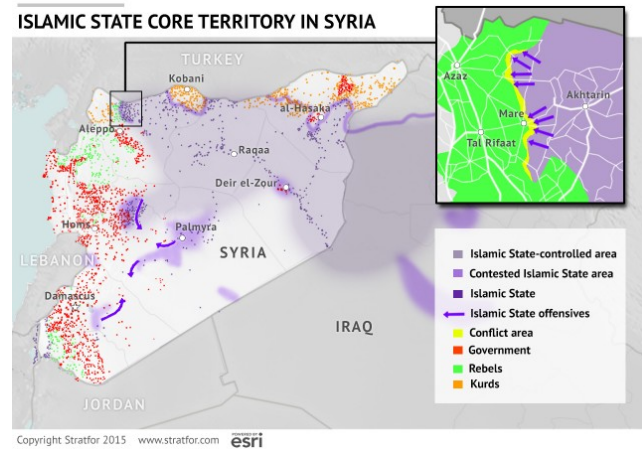


Islamic State: Security Challenges to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Islamic State represents a logical continuation of al Qaeda that triggered both a sense of Islamic power and shaped the United States and its allies into a threat to Islam. It has created a military and political framework to exploit the situation that al Qaeda created. Its military operations have been impressive and its fighters' demonstrate enormous flexibility in the battlefield.

The fall of the Soviet Union has set in motion the events never contemplated before as apparent defeat of al Qaeda has opened the door for its logical successor, the Islamic State. The question at hand is whether the regional and international powers want to control the Islamic State or would prioritize their turf battles.



And at the heart of that question is the mystery of Islamic State ability to supply large numbers of forces, their war waging material and other crucial resources and the combat training. It is puzzling from where they get these resources and the training. In rare display of considerable flexibility on the battlefield, they have managed to take rebel forces in Syria and Iraq through a surprised large-scale offensive aimed at securing more territory along the Syria-Turkish border.

Mentioning of the Alawites in Syria is important, being a leading group fighting against Islamic States in the vicious Syrian civil war along with Free Syrian Army, Kurdish People's Protection Units, Euphrates Volcano Outfit and Syrian rebel and Kurdish forces. They have suffered maximum losses compared to any other group. More than 70,000 young Alawite have been killed and 120,000 are wounded. Another 10,000 are still unaccounted for. This indicates the complexity of crisis and conflict against Islamic States.

The defeat of Islamic States being an international threat requires regional and international rebalancing to increasingly devote their attention and resources to fight the Islamic State, rather than prioritizing battles with each other. The role of regional countries is critical, particularly surrounding Levant to include two non-Arab states of Iran and Turkey and one Arab power of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

These countries have dealt the threat of Islamic States differently that Islamic States took advantage of its war on Shiite dissent and accordingly has prioritized the defense of its

core supply lines, arranged equipment and much-needed recruits and strategically they demonstrate flexibility in its offensive operations.

Iran supports Iraqi Shiites and al Assad government, so that Islamic State does not hold the power in Damascus and Baghdad and could threaten Iran again. The Turkey obviously is hostile towards al Assad regime and many commenters believe that it sees the Islamic State as less of a threat than al Assad. While the Turkish government denies such charges, but rumors of alleged shipments of weaponry to unknown parties in Syria by the Turkish intelligence was a dominant theme in Turkey's recent elections. However, Turkey expects the Islamic State to be defeated by the United States and it gains politically in Syria.

The Iranian nuclear program is less important to the Americans than collaboration with Iran against the Islamic State. The US and allies contemplate that Islamic State threatens Israel and western bloc with its ideology, particularly if it spreads to Palestine and across. US and western alliance seem ready to accommodate with past Arab rival al Assad being less dangerous than the Islamic State.

The Islamic State poses an existential threat to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for a transnational Islamic movement. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, along with some other Gulf Cooperation Council members and Jordan, want to contain Islamic State transnationalism without conceding the ground to the Shiites in Iraq and Syria.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries have forged an air capability used in Yemen that might be used elsewhere if needed, but a balance and mindset between political secular Islam bridging fault line between Sunni versus Shiite, and other complex and interacting factions is far from forging meaningful alliance. This however gives advantage Islamic States.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is increasingly surrounded by sectarian turmoil threatened by Islamic States that can affect the kingdom's security and political culture. The Kingdom in the **south** has poverty-stricken and sectarian divided Yemen, which seems to have joined Somalia as a failed state adjacent the southern approaches to the Red Sea (and Suez). To the **north**, Syria and Iraq are awash in sectarian violence as Islamic States terrorists seek to establish a caliphate.



The integrity of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is vital for greater stability of Muslim World and fight against Islamic States due to some obvious reasons: The Kingdom's landmass is bigger than the other States of Gulf, stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, which is mostly empty and difficult to defend against creeping terrorists' network of networks as Kingdom has sparse population, which is about 80% is concentrated in three urban centers.

Given the geographical complexity, the Kingdom's security concern are due to spillover effects of terrorism, proxies, concerns over spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), sustaining and maintaining oil related infrastructure and industry and threat of rebellion and aggression erupting from the neighbors.

The Kingdom has to play a critical role in fight against Islamic States and other proxies responsible for regional insecurity. Therefore, Kingdom must accord priority to domestic and regional internal challenges and revisit its own national internal security strategies in order to institutionalize its own integral and regional internal security strategic initiatives to consolidate its place as the regional Arab leader and help its neighbors fight for stability and prepare upcoming challenges both outside its borders and from within.