

Trump Sides With ISIS Supporters in Middle East Sectarian War

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[Shadowproof](#)

In a speech that contradicted numerous public statements, [President Donald Trump](#) praised the rulers of Saudi Arabia and other gulf state autocracies for fighting [Islamic](#) terrorism in his first foreign trip as president. Despite irrefutable evidence (that [he himself previously referenced](#)) that the [Kingdom of Saudi Arabia](#) is the primary source of support for [Sunni](#) jihadist terrorist groups such as [Al Qaeda](#) and ISIS, Trump celebrated the Saudi government's commitment to combating Islamic extremism.

Beyond support for terrorism, Trump had slammed Saudi Arabia in the past for wanting to ["enslave women and kill gays."](#) But, in another reversal, Trump characterized the country as a wonderful place to live, [saying](#), "I have always heard about the splendor of your country and the kindness of your people, but words do not do justice to the grandeur of this sacred place."

While some of the complete rhetorical flip-flops could arguably be attributed to diplomatic niceties, the actual substance of President Trump's speech addressing the Islamic world was both absurd and dangerous.

Trump not only praised one of [Al Qaeda and ISIS' chief backers](#) as a leader in the fight against Islamic extremism, he essentially blamed Iran and [Shiite Islam](#) for the instability in the [Middle East](#). He even praised the government of Bahrain whose Sunni minority government has been engaging in a [brutal crackdown](#) of the Shiite majority post-Arab Spring.

His condemnation of Iran as an authoritarian regime was particularly hollow, given the audience was made up of autocrats working to suppress domestic democratic movements and Iran had [successfully conducted an election](#) two days earlier. While it was by no means an open or substantially fair process, the Iranian people did get to offer a limited voice in deciding their future—an influence not granted in the slightest by the other governments represented in the room, especially the Saudis who rule under literal feudalism.

Putting aside the hypocrisy of the moral claims, President Trump blew a major opportunity to address one of the leading causes of Sunni jihadist extremism today: the export of [Wahhabist/Salafist ideology](#) by the Saudis to the rest of the world. That poison helped inspire both Al Qaeda and ISIS as well as the wealthy gulf state officials who fund them.

Rather than confront the roots of the terrorism that has savaged the U.S. and Europe, Trump praised its benefactors and took a side in a sectarian war that continues to rip apart the Middle East. The position is fundamentally counterproductive if your primary concern is American security.

The strategy is not good for America, but it is good for Saudi Arabia and [Israel](#). Trump's first foreign trip included a visit to Israel and the Vatican as well as Saudi Arabia. According to Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett, he spoke with Trump about his proposal for a ["right wing peace"](#) across the region, which relies on the Sunni gulf states allying with Israel against Shiite Iran and its allies, such as the government of Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

President Trump ran on getting the [United States](#) out of the Middle East and away from [stupid wars](#). But his actions and rhetoric so far as president indicate he is ready to double-down on dumb.