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With the recent events in Iraq and the continuing strife within Syria, it would seem a good opportunity to remind ourselves of the true nature and causes of conflict in the Middle East.

Our media still, as a whole, seeks to convince us that this is a disagreement between several nation-states. Maybe this viewpoint would be of value if we were being convinced that peace is actually possible. The truth, though, supports the position that this conflict is a way of life that has been going on for over 1300 years.

Others Bring Order?

After the fall of the Turkish Ottoman Empire in 1922, The European nations (who comprised the world's military powers at the time), attempting to inspire stability in the region, gathered together in secret and forcibly drew up the borders of what we know today as the Middle East nations.

These borders have existed on our maps since then and have been enforced mostly by autocratic rule of the strong. Today, these artificial, imposed borders are becoming blurred and, in some cases, dissolving before our eyes.

The Root Cause

Upon the death of Mohammed, the warrior-founder of Islam, in 632 a.d., there came a schism within the tribes he had consolidated—over a disagreement in the method of choosing a successor.

Within Islam, the two main dominant groups became blood enemies, the Sunnis and Shiites. This feud has continued until present times. The Sunnis presently control Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan. The Shiites rule Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and Syria.

These two tribes have been in a war, very brutal at times, for over 1300 years. The artificial borders created by outsiders have done nothing to bring reconciliation between them. When they have not been trying to displace Israel from the Middle East, they have been killing each other.

It has always been a challenge, no matter whether Sunni or Shiite controlled, for any mid-eastern country to maintain social peace and cooperation. This is why the various governments are all dictatorial. Only physical might could maintain any semblance of peace.

This has never been a struggle between countries. This has been a blood-feud between warring tribes that historically hate each other.

Somehow the media-inspired perspective fed to us has never felt quite rational. Oftentimes it just didn't make sense. This is because what was happening between tribes, that often crossed geopolitical borders, was being explained as interaction between normal countries, with defined borders, and common disagreements.

Now, again, the artificially imposed borders are all but non-existent.

A New Middle East?

Iraq is currently a Shiite-controlled country, supported by other Shiite regimes, most prominently Iran. The Sunni resistance in Iraq, without U.S. forces to impede them any longer, have taken control of many of the largest cities and are presently threatening to take the capital, Baghdad. U.S. troops and war ships are positioned off the coast as the U.S. Embassy—with its extensive diplomatic personnel—is being evacuated. Iraqi Shiite clerics have put out a call for the "faithful" to rally to the support of the governing regime. The general population is taking up arms and the conflict is escalating by the hour.

Now the border between Iraq and its neighbor Syria, in which there is a Sunni uprising also, has all but disappeared. Two groups, known as The Islamic State of Iraq and The Levant, want to establish a Sharia-ruled state bridging both countries, in effect uniting a Sunni-dominated region across the center of the Middle East.

If this occurs, it could lead to other regional territories being established. The tribal conflicts, and the affiliations that inspire them, are threatening to redraw borders all across the whole Middle East.

The Kurds, another tribe, situated in northern Iraq and northeastern Syria, are seizing their opportunity and seeking to establish their own separate homeland. The Sunnis have consolidated a swath of land across the heartland of the Middle East and the Shiites are claiming everything that is left.

The borders that were established naively by the European outsiders are becoming less and less geopolitically important. Of course, all along these tribal borders there is constant conflict in the transitional territories.

This is the rest of the world's worst nightmare. Not understanding the true nature of these conflicts, the outsiders have tried to use their own geopolitical solutions to quell tribal conflicts with the hope of bringing stability to this resource-rich area. Clearly, historically and culturally, their attempts have been ill-conceived and ineffective from the beginning.

Is The Worst Yet To Come?

The U.S. is being used as a pawn between these tribal groups. It is being forced into relationships with religious entities that are clearly not acting in our best interests. Secretary of State John Kerry is now saying the U.S. will be working with Iran to resolve the issues in Iraq.

True, Iraq and Iran are both of the same tribal affiliation but the U.S. is presently in very delicate negotiations with Iran over their nuclear program. In an area that has historically been known as the birthplace of haggling and negotiations, this endangers any leverage we might have to prevent the next great escalation of conflict in this area: nuclear weapons.

We have always been fearful that if Iran acquired nuclear weapons, they would use them either against Israel or the U.S. But for 1300 years these tribes have been looking for a weapons solution to their blood-feud problems. We are now, possibly, on the edge of an out-of-control escalation of chaos and conflict within the region.

Events are transpiring at break-neck speeds. This gives little time for a measured and well thought out response to any action. Within this environment resides the opportunity of a conflict that no one has intended and no one can avoid.

Further Reading

- [*Is a third Iraq war imminent?*](#)
— Fox News
- [*U.S. Beefs Up Security at Baghdad Embassy*](#)
— Arutz Sheva
- [*Pentagon Sends Another Ship Into Arabian Gulf Amid Iraq Turmoil*](#)
— NBC
- [*What Is the Difference Between Sunni and Shiite Muslims—and Why Does It Matter?*](#)
— History News Network