



Research Report

Forum: *Organisation of Islamic cooperation*

Issue : *Strengthening the complex relation between Sunni and Shia Muslims*

Chairs: *Matthijs Koch and Gialesi Notkamp*

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Personal Introduction

Hey, I'm Gialesi Notkamp. I'm a first year student at the Technical University Eindhoven, where I study Electrical Engineering. I like to play the piano, row and hang out with friends. I have attended 10 MUN's –of which one was a University MUN- and I like participating in MUN's very much. Unfortunately due to my busy schedule, I won't be able to participate in many MUN's. Thus I was extra thrilled when the opportunity was given to me to chair at CalsMUN, the MUN of my high school. The past two years I have helped set up the CalsMUN, so I'm very excited to come back as a chair. Hope you're all excited too!



Dear CalsMUN delegates,

My name is Matthijs Koch, I am 18 years old and I will be serving as your chair during the conference.

Last year I graduated from Cals College and currently I live in Delft, where I study Architecture and the Built Environment.

I started my MUN-career as a delegate at Cals College, and I have been the Deputy Secretary General and Conference Manager at respectively the first and second edition of CalsMUN. I am very excited to be back at CalsMUN and I am looking forward to meeting all of you soon!

The best of luck with your preparations,

Matthijs





Organisation of Islamic Cooperation introduction

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is an organisation similar to the UN. Excluding the UN it is even the largest inter-governmental organisation. The OIC focusses on protecting the interests of the Muslim world. They consist of multiple bodies and 57 member states. The goal of the OIC is to preserve Islamic social and economic values. The OIC also strives for a better connection on the grounds of social, economic and political grounds for its member states. Syria has been suspended due to human rights abuses in the Syrian Civil War.¹

Even though the OIC is not actually a body of the UN but rather an organisation similar to the UN, we will still be debating at a Model United Nations, so we will apply the same rules and procedures that apply in a normal MUN committee in this MUN's OIC.

¹ <https://www.oic-oci.org/home/?lan=en>

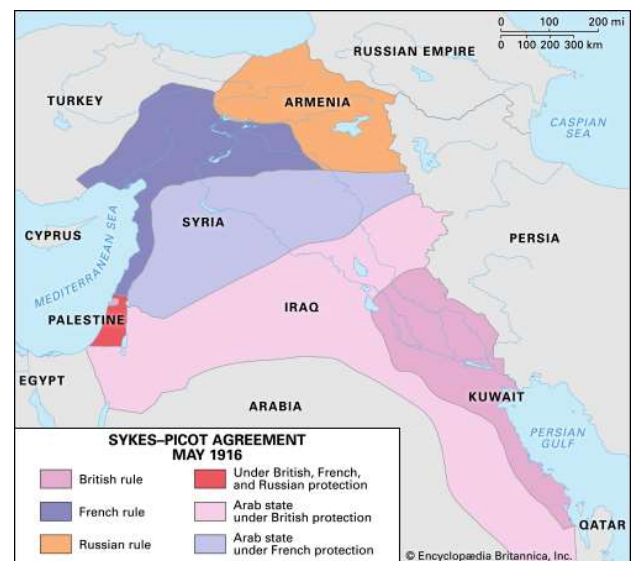


Issue: Strengthening the complex relation between Sunni and Shia Muslims

For ages the Shia and Sunni, the two main branches of Islam, have been in conflict. The origin of this conflict is found at 630, when prophet Mohammed died. After the death of Mohammed the followers of Islam have to choose a successor. On the one hand there were Muslims that thought Abu Kabr, one of the closest companions of Mohammed, should become the successor. On the other hand there were those who thought bloodline and family was more important. They wanted Ali ibn Abi Talib, Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law to become the new caliph of the Islamic community.²

Ali eventually led the caliphate, but was assassinated in 661 by Mu'awiya, who took over the caliphate. The followers of Ali, or shi'atu Ali, rejected this new caliphate. They argued that the leader should be related to Ali and Mohammed. This is the start of the Shias.³

Centuries later another there is another big turning point in the Shia-Sunni relation. The British and French secretly make an agreement with the agreement of Russia to divide the Arab provinces of the during the First World War weakened Ottoman Empire. This Sykes-Picot Agreement, also known as the Asia Minor Agreement, divided the part of the Ottoman Empire in the way shown on the picture on the right. When the Arabs knew about the secret agreement that was made they resented it.⁴



After becoming independent the focus was changed from the hate towards colonialism to the sectarianism. Especially Saudi Arabia, containing mostly Sunni, and Iran, which had recently become a Shia power after a revolution that overthrew the oppressing Sunni government and thus sparking hope with other Shia countries suppressed by a Sunni government, had growing rivalry. It was also no surprise that most violent sectarianist groups of the Muslim world had origins in those countries.²

² The Great Divide: Sunni vs Shia

³ <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/sunni-shia-divide#!/sunni-shia-divide>

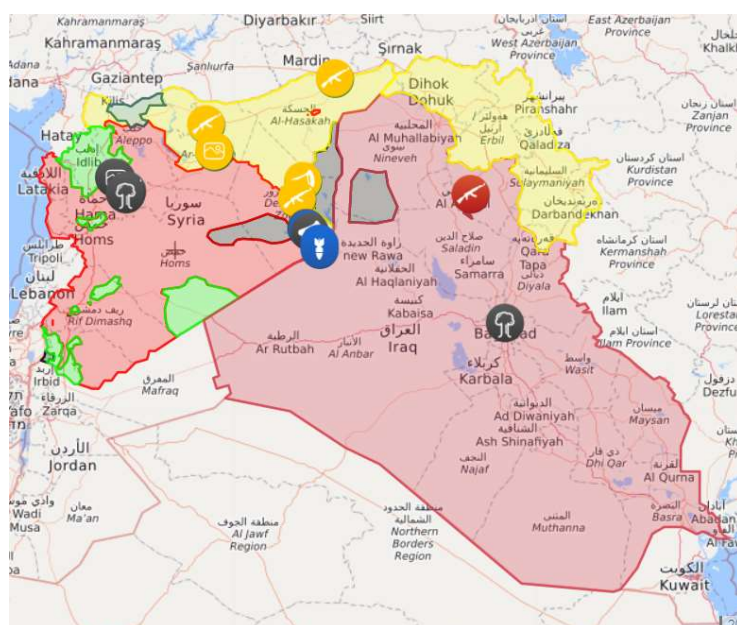
⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Sykes-Picot-Agreement>



However they Iran and Saudi Arabia are not the only countries who had to deal with sectarian violence. Since in some countries the Sunni minority oppressed the Shia majority, such as in the Hussein regime of Iraq, or vice versa, like the Shia al-Assad regime in Syria, the tensions rose. Especially when the U.S. invaded Iraq and removed Saddam Hussein. Logically the Shia majority took over the power. Seeing that in Afghanistan the Taliban also recently had been defeated, the Sunnis feared a Shia revival.

This revival came partially in the form of the Arab Spring or Arab Awakening. Countries such as Bahrain oppressed by the Sunni minority, protested and there was unrest in many Middle East countries. In Syria the Shia minority that had been governing was also protested against and the sectarian tensions, that had been dormant in Syria for a while, were awakened. The civil war in Syria divided the Sunni and Shia once more. With on the one hand the Assad regime, supported by the Shia, and on the other hand the rebels, supported by the Sunni. As more and more foreign Sunni started to come into Syria, increased involvement of Iran and Hezbollah was seen. On top of that Saudi Arabia and some other Gulf countries funded the rebels. Syria had now become a real proxy war with most of the Middle East involved.

Since ISIS separated from Al-Qaeda, the Middle East has yet another sectarian conflict. ISIS is brutal against Shia and the Sunni that oppose them. Spreading around Syria and Iraq, the conflict grew bigger and also gained more foreign attention. The separation between Shia and Sunni is now has become a big issue. With the ISIS's power fading a solution must be found this escalates again.



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⁵ <https://isis.liveuamap.com/>



Major countries involved

Iran

Iran has been involved in the sectarianist violence since the beginning. Nowadays they support the Assad regime in their fight against the Sunni and rebels. With over 90% of the Muslims in Iran being Shia, they are by far the biggest Shia country in the world. Plus they support sectarian militia such as Hezbollah.

Saudi Arabia

The country in the Middle East with the highest percent of Sunni. They are in constant conflict with Iran, the Shia power in the Middle East. It even has come so far that in 2016 they broke off their diplomatic relations with Iran. UEA and Kuwait followed the example that Saudi Arabia set and downgraded their relations with Iran. Bahrain and Sudan followed Iran and broke their diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia.

Iraq

One of the only countries that has a Shia majority. Iraq has been through a lot of Sunni oppression, but with the help of the U.S. and Iran they were 'freed' from the Sunni government.



Timeline of related events

- 632:** Death Mohammed
- 661:** Assassination Ali ibn Abi Talib
- 680:** The Battle of Karbala
- 1501:** Safavid Dynasty
- 1639:** Ottomans conquer Iraq
- 1916:** Sykes-Picot Agreement
- 1932:** The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is formed
- 1963:** Ba'ath Party seizes power in Syria
- 1976:** Start of the Lebanese Civil War
- 1979:** Iran's Revolution
- 1980:** Shia Protests in Pakistan
- 1980:** Iraq-Iran war
- 2001:** Al-Qaeda strikes the U.S.
- 2003:** Saddam Hussein is defeated
- 2006:** Saddam's Execution
- 2011:** Protests in the Middle East
- 2013:** Creation of ISIS
- 2014:** Anti-Shia Sentiments spread to Indonesia
- 2016:** Saudi Arabia cuts ties with Iran



Sources

Links used:

- The Great Divide: Sunni vs Shia (Tv-program: “Great Decisions in Foreign Policy” season 6 episode 3)
- <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/sunni-shia-divide#!/sunni-shia-divide>
- <https://www.britannica.com/event/Sykes-Picot-Agreement>
- <https://isis.liveuamap.com/>

Other links worth a look:

- http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/features/shia-and-sunni-muslims-do-you-know-the-difference_16339
- https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/fields/print_2122.html
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16047709>