

Fraudulent links in the Middle East

Op-ed: Netanyahu's Hamas-ISIS equation and Kerry's link between ISIS and Israeli-Palestinian conflict are both unfounded and only serve as a way to avoid dealing with the real challenges.

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A new strategic game has arrived in the Middle East. Everyone is busy developing links and connections between events and processes in the region, especially around the [Islamic State's](#) achievements and [Operation Protective Edge](#).

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Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented an [equation between Hamas, ISIS and Iran](#). Iran presented a connection between its willingness to cooperate in the war on ISIS and its demands from the West in the nuclear negotiations. The United States agreed to wage a war against ISIS as long as there would be a change of government in Iraq, and Turkey agrees to participate in that war if it received a US commitment to bring down the Bashar Assad regime in Syria.

US Secretary of State John Kerry recently [drew a link](#) between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the growing power of ISIS. All these links are unfounded and mainly serve to disguise other interests and motives.

US President Barack Obama's condition for providing military aid to curb ISIS was that the Iraqi president, the Shiite Nouri al-Maliki, would be replaced, because he had excluded and alienated the Sunnis, laying the foundations for their support of ISIS. Obama failed to implement the same policy in Syria and rejected Turkey's demand that he would commit to toppling

Assad.

The Turkish linkage is a smoke screen. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is not interested in fighting ISIS, especially in the Kurdish town of Kobani, because he is afraid that the Kurds will grow stronger in Syria and in Turkey itself, and it's more important for him to topple Assad than to destroy ISIS.

Iran is trying to take advantage of the interest it shares with the US in the war on ISIS in order to gain concessions in the agreement for regulating its nuclear program. But this linkage is unfounded as well. Iran sees ISIS as a dangerous enemy because it is fighting the Shiites and Assad, its ally, and therefore it needs no American incentive or concession to fight the jihadist organization.

Netanyahu tried to convince the world that Hamas, ISIS and Iran are the same thing. This is a problematic linkage. Netanyahu addressed similar characteristics the three share, and there are some of those; Obama and everyone else addressed the differences between them, and there are some of those too.

Netanyahu promoted the equation so that the world, and mainly the West, would recognize Operation Protective Edge as a war similar to the one the coalition waged on ISIS and would back off from its intention to pressure him on the Palestinian issue and make concessions to Iran in the nuclear negotiations. The world didn't buy this equation and its conclusions.

Last week, Kerry stated that the lack of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was helping ISIS recruit supporters and fighters. He said he had heard about this link from every Arab leader he had spoken to recently. This linkage is unfounded as well. Those joining ISIS are driven by an aspiration to conquer the world and physically destroy every country, regime and religious or national group which do not accept the organization's theological philosophy.

The US is afraid of facing the dilemma posed by Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas' strategy – gaining recognition for a Palestinian state at the United Nations. If it votes in favor of it, it will be deviating from its regular stance that such unilateral moves undermine negotiations, which are the only way to reach a stable agreement, and will be exposed to criticism from Israel's supporters in the Congress and in the public opinion. If it votes against it, vetoing the decision, it will be exposed to criticism in the Arab and Muslim world and in Western Europe.

Kerry thinks that resuming the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians will prevent the UN dilemma, and that's a legitimate consideration, but linking it to ISIS is pathetic.

Creating links between events and processes in the region is tempting from a conceptual point of view but is superficial and misleading from a strategic point of view, and mainly serves as a way to avoid dealing with the real challenges.

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