

## American Exit from Afghanistan Gives Global Jihad a Boost

Daniel Sonnenfeld / August 24, 2021

*Washington's allies in the Middle East worry as US presence shrinks and security threats grow*

TV screens and newspapers have filled in recent days with images of Afghan men and women crowding Kabul's airport and its surroundings, hoping to board a plane and escape the Taliban's rule. As US forces hastily withdraw from the war-battered country, the Islamist organization was able to rapidly reconquer its former kingdom and regain its supremacy. The establishment of a Taliban regime in place of the US-backed government now appears to be a settled fact.

[...]

Dr. **Yoel Guzansky**, a senior research fellow at **Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies** and an expert on Gulf politics and security, explains that American allies in the Gulf see the recent evacuation as part of a known trend of the US reducing its presence in the Middle East in its entirety, as the White House's priorities change.

"The Gulf countries are very anxious about what the future holds, and what will happen to their national security without sufficient American support," **Guzansky** told The Media Line.

[...]

**Guzansky** said another cause for concern for countries in the Gulf is the possible flourishing of "al-Qaida and the establishment of terror there [in Afghanistan], that could be directed at the Gulf states." Difficulties in the relations between the Taliban and Saudi Arabia in recent years, and efforts "to modernize the country and [advance] 'a different kind of Islam'" lend additional credibility to this threat.

He agrees it is far from clear that the Taliban will allow jihadi organizations to establish themselves under its auspices, but if the Afghanistan of the '90s and early 2000s does return, it carries an additional danger causing worry in the Gulf. Two decades ago, al-Qaida and its ideology proved attractive to some young men in the Arabian Peninsula. Most notorious of them was, of course, bin Laden, but notably, out of 19 hijackers in the 9/11 attacks, 17 had either Saudi or Emirati citizenship.

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