

NORMALISATION OF TIES WITH ISRAEL

Palestinians cornered, but what Arabs getting?

With new US weaponry analysts fear more chaos, not peace, in the Middle East

AGENCIES

Breaking a longstanding taboo, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Israel governments on Tuesday signed accords in Washington, DC to normalise ties between the Gulf nations and Israel, a move political analysts say will do little to Middle East peace.

Threatened by Iran and facing uncertainty over their oil-dependent economies, Gulf nations have opted for the US-brokered deals for advanced US weaponry ditching a cause that once gave them a sense of unity amid divergent interests: Palestinian issue.

While the unprecedented moves by UAE and Bahrain have put the Palestinian leadership on a tight spot and give US President Donald Trump foreign policy gains in the election year, it remains unclear how the accords will benefit the Gulf countries.

Analyst say the accords, which releases more US arms to Middle East, risks escalating more conflicts in Yemen and possibly Libya and express doubts that the moves may have little impact on isolating Iran, apparently US's primary goal in the region.

Israel's rapprochement with Gulf Arab states has left the Palestinians defiant, but their leadership is now facing calls to overhaul their strategy to avoid becoming even more marginalised in a fast-changing region.

Both UAE and Bahrain have defended its move in part as a way of halting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's proposed annexation of settlements in parts of the occupied West Bank.

The Israel-UAE deal "suspended" those annexation plans -- but Netanyahu has insisted they are not off the table in the long run.

The Palestinian approach to securing freedom from Israeli occupation has for years relied on a longstanding pan-Arab position that called for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied West Bank and Gaza and Israel's acceptance of Palestinian statehood, in return for normal relations with Arab countries.

But the Palestinians last week failed to persuade the Arab League to condemn nations breaking ranks.

The Palestinians' strategy centres on holding Israel to account in international legal tribunals, and trying to break the United States' dominance over the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Tareq Baqoni, an analyst with the International Crisis Group, told Reuters.

"Arab and European support in that strategy is crucial, but it is questionable that the Palestinians will be able to secure either to the level required to ensure a just peace."

Despite signs of shifting Arab support, Saeb Erekat, Secretary General of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), said the underlying Palestinian strategy for achieving a state in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza would not change.



Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al Zayani, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, US President Donald Trump and United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed participate in the signing of the Abraham Accords on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, on September 15, 2020. PHOTO: REUTERS

Frustrated by the Palestinians' refusal to take part in Trump-led talks, the White House has sought to bypass Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and his team, apparently hoping they will see the deals with the UAE and Bahrain as incentives to return to negotiations.

Palestinians authorities have already cut ties with US accusing after it recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and endorsed Israel's plan to annex West Bank settlements.

For more than two years Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner has tried sidestepping Abbas to appeal to Palestinians directly, telling Al-Quds newspaper in 2018: "The world has moved forward while you have been left behind. Don't allow your grandfather's conflict to determine your children's future."

That has had little apparent success. And political analysts, while urging Palestinian leadership to change tactics, warned it has to choose carefully its allies.

The Palestinian cause had already become less central in Middle East as the region has been rocked by the Arab Spring upheavals, the Syria war and the bloody reign of the Islamic State jihadist group.

At the same time, hostility has deepened between US ally Saudi Arabia and Iran, its Shia Muslim rival which supports proxy forces from Syria to Lebanon.

One Western diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, shared the view that at the moment "the Palestinians don't really have a way out, they are stuck."

"They are also stuck because of those who want to support their cause, whether it is Turkey or Iran."

Palestinian analyst Ghassan Khatib argued the Palestinians should keep their distance from Turkey, Iran and also Qatar, which is deeply at odds with other major Gulf powers.

"It's not wise for the Palestinians to be caught within the regional tensions and competition between regional superpowers," he said.

William Hartung, director of the Arms and Security Program at the DC-based Center for International Policy, told Al Jazeera arms sales were an "important factor" in the agreements.

The UAE has long wanted F-35 fighter jets, Hartung said, and larger drones, which the US was unable to sell because of its commitment to Israel's military advantage.

The US ramped up its arms sales by 42 percent globally in 2019, an increase of almost \$70b, according to figures from the Forum on the Arms Trade (FAT) from the US Foreign Military Sales programme.

But the Middle East and North Africa region far outpaced the global growth rate, going from \$11.8b in 2018 to more than \$25bn in 2019, or a 118 percent increase. The UAE spent more than \$4.7bn on US arms in 2019, FAT recorded, with Bahrain spending \$3.37b, Qatar spending about \$3b and Saudi Arabia at roughly \$2.7b.

Hartung said Bahrain, which is a Shia-majority nation with a Sunni monarchy and has human rights issues, may have agreed to normalisation to access to advanced weaponry and the Saudis, who reiterated its commitment to Palestinians,

could potentially follow.

Regarding domestic political victories, Hartung said the Trump administration can "brag" about normalisation during the presidential campaign and possibly tout jobs from the F-35 programme.

The move may "also be perceived as a move to further contain Iran", a target of ire from the Trump administration's and a regional foe for the UAE, Bahrain and Israel, though Hartung said he did not see it as a benefit.

But Assal Rad, a senior research fellow at the National Iranian-American Council, does not think containing Iran was in the "calculus on the UAE's side".

The UAE and Iran have long-standing economic ties and a sizable diaspora of roughly 500,000 Iranians live in the Emirates, mostly in Dubai. UAE exports to Iran totalled \$10.23bn in 2018, according to UN figures cited by Trading Economics, making it among Iran's top trade partners.

If the UAE was adopting an anti-Iran strategy, recent meetings between Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who led the UAE delegation in Washington on Tuesday, would not have occurred.

"It's attempting a sort of balancing act. I don't see it as an anti-Iran move. They wanted advanced weapons ... which this deal makes possible," Assal Rad added.

Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, told Al Jazeera the deal and possible advanced weapons sales could further threaten regional stability, but not in Iran.

Normalisation could lead to an "emboldened" UAE in Yemen in Libya, he continued. Parsi pointed to Saudi Arabia, which he claimed has achieved tacit approval for "reckless" military actions in Yemen by purchasing US weapons.

While the UAE has reduced actions in Yemen, it is still active there and concerns remain about military actions in Libya, Parsi warned. Alterman, for his part, said normalisation was not a "get out of jail free card" for the UAE.

The upcoming election could shift US strategy towards the Gulf as a broader conversation about how much effort the US should spend on the region continues, which weighs on individual Gulf states, Alterman said.

"Ultimately, the US has a larger regional strategy that is [more important] than any of its individual relationships with individual" states, Alterman said, and "every country needs to figure out how it needs to shape its relationship" within said US strategy. Normalisation "represents a beginning of the UAE's answer" to that question, Alterman concluded.

But how it will play out in the future in a volatile and changing region is anyone's guess.

India foils Qaeda 'terrorist attacks'

Arrests 9 from W Bengal, Kerala

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) yesterday said it has arrested nine al-Qaeda militants who were planning attacks in several locations including the capital New Delhi.

"The group was planning to undertake terrorist attacks at vital installations in India with an aim to kill innocent people and strike terror in their minds," the country's main counter-terrorism arm said in a statement.

Those arrested "were motivated to undertake attacks at multiple places" including the capital region.

Six of the militants were arrested in the eastern state of West Bengal and while three in the southern state of Kerala, the NIA said, adding the individuals were "associated with Pakistan sponsored module of al Qaeda".

A spokesman for Pakistan's foreign office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Pakistan has often denied giving material support to militants.

India has stepped up an offensive against militants in the Muslim-majority region of Kashmir and elsewhere.

Last year, Indian forces killed the leader of an al-Qaeda-affiliated militant group in Kashmir, triggering protests in parts of the disputed region.

In the latest raids, the NIA seized sharp weapons, domestically made firearms and locally fabricated body armour. The nine militants will be produced in court for police custody and further investigation, the agency said.

If you do not snooze you lose

REUTERS, Washington

Scientists are providing a fuller understanding of the essential role that sleep plays in brain health, identifying an abrupt transition at about 2.4 years of age when its primary purpose shifts from brain building to maintenance and repair.

Researchers on Friday said they conducted a statistical analysis on data from more than 60 sleep studies. They looked at sleep time, duration of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, brain size and body size, and devised a mathematical model for how sleep changes during development.

There are basically two types of sleep, each tied to specific brain waves and neuronal activity. REM, with the eyes moving quickly from side to side behind closed eyelids, is deep sleep with vivid dreams. Non-REM sleep is largely dreamless.

During REM sleep, the brain forms new neural connections by building and strengthening synapses that enable them to communicate, reinforcing learning and consolidating memories. During sleep, the brain also repairs the modicum of daily neurological damage it typically experiences to genes and proteins within neurons as well as clearing out byproducts that build up.

At about 2.4 years of age, the findings showed, sleep's primary function changed from building and cutting connections during REM sleep to neural repair during both REM and non-REM sleep.

"Sleep is required across the animal kingdom and is nearly as ubiquitous as eating and breathing," Van Savage, a UCLA professor, said. "I'd say it is a pillar of human health."

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
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দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০৩/২০২০-২১
নির্দেশিত শর্তাদেশে ২০২০-২১ অর্থ সনে খুলনা মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, খুলনার জন্য (১) বিভিন্ন প্রকার আসবাবপত্র (টেকিসহ) সরবরাহ (২) যন্ত্রপাতি ও অন্যান্য সরঞ্জামাদি সরবরাহ (৩) বাদক দলের পোশাক সামগ্রী সরবরাহ এবং (৪) বাদক দলের বাদ্যযন্ত্র সরবরাহ কাজের ক্ষেত্রে নিম্নোক্ত প্রকৃত টিকাদার/সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে "দি পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা/২০০৮ এবং এ সংক্রান্ত তথ্যপত্রসহ সংশ্লিষ্ট বিধিবিধান" অনুসারে নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্তাদেশে সীমাবদ্ধকৃত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

বরিশাল সিটি কর্পোরেশন
নগর ভবন, বরিশাল
(প্রশাসনিক শাখা)
নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি
তারিখঃ ১৭/০৯/২০২০খ্রিঃ
মারক নং-বিবিসি/প্রকৌশল/১২/১৯-২১২
বরিশাল সিটি কর্পোরেশনের আওতাধীন নিম্নবর্ণিত পদে ০৩ (তিন) বছর মেয়াদী সম্পূর্ণ অস্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে চুক্তিভিত্তিক জনবল নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে যোগ্যতাসম্পন্ন প্রকৃত বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।