



The US Is Undermining the Abraham Accords

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BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 2,104, July 25, 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: In contrast to the Trump administration's tough stance on Iran, President Joe Biden's willingness to negotiate with and reach a weak agreement with Iran undermines the strategic rationale for the normalization agreements between Israel and the Gulf states.

Official announcements from Washington herald the reduction of the US military presence in the Middle East. This reduction will include air defense in outposts in Saudi Arabia dealing with the Houthi problem in Yemen. This is not shocking news. For President Joe Biden, US foreign policy priorities are now focused primarily on China and much less on the Middle East (or Russia).

This is the reason for the administration's clear lack of interest in the Middle East, and why Biden has so far shown no extraordinary eagerness to recreate the Obama administration's first term and get deeply involved in the complex swamp of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Democratic progressives in Washington who wanted to press their views on the Israeli election and the West Bank territories retreated after realizing that the administration is not enthusiastic about such matters at present.

It is unclear whether the trend of non-involvement in the Palestinian issue will continue. It is quite possible that the political change in Israel will encourage Biden's people to jump in and try what has failed time and time again.

Although reducing the US presence in the Middle East was a common goal for both the Biden and Trump administrations, there is clearly a big difference between them when it comes to creating the strategic conditions that will allow the American withdrawal. Under the Trump administration, reducing the military presence was accompanied by tremendous pressure on Iran, creating the potential for a much better nuclear agreement than the misconceived 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA). At the same time, Trump worked to

create a new regional strategic balance based on an Israeli-Gulf coalition in the form of the Abraham Accords, all while securing advanced arms deals with coalition partner countries. This approach pitted the rich, pragmatic, and risk-averse Arab Gulf states against the revisionist and violent “axis of resistance” led by Tehran.

The Biden administration is completely different. It wants the US out of the region quickly, and believes the way to achieve this is through an agreement with Iran that will allow it to become a regional superpower—both in terms of lifting the economic blockade to which it is now subject and allowing the Iranian regime potential access to nuclear weapons.

The undermining of the strategic rationale of the Abraham Accords and the Israeli-Gulf “Iron Wall” against Iran is evidenced by the recent flirtation some Gulf States have been having with Tehran, which reflects their understanding of the change in American attitudes under the Biden administration.

This is not good news for Israel, which has spent a decade continuously working to augment its strategic status in the region (partly under a cloak of secrecy). Biden’s approach could mean the progress made by Israel in its relations with the Arab world is now beginning a reversal, or is at least facing a setback. If this occurs, the future could be marked by an Iranian strategic ascendance. This will create conditions that favor the “resistance axis” and could render the Middle Eastern reality much more complex and even explosive, as events of the recent war in the Gaza Strip show.

This is an edited version of an article that appeared in Hebrew in Makor Rishon on June 20, 2021.

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