

# The Possible Saudi-Israeli Normalization Post-Gaza

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*Israel and Saudi Arabia seemed on the verge of establishing normal relations, but the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 changed everything after Israel began a horrific bombardment of Gaza in a revenge attack. The dead Israelis numbered about 1,400, but the dead Palestinians now amount to about 35,000, with more deaths recorded daily.*

When Israeli **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** took office for the sixth time, he stated he had two main goals: to increase illegal settlements in the Occupied territory of the West Bank, and to sign a normalization pact with Saudi Arabia as part of the US-led Abraham Accords, which were rolled out during the administration of **President Donald Trump**.

US **President Joe Biden** continued the push for an Israeli-Saudi pact, and all signs appeared to point to a successful future normalization. Then Gaza happened, and the world watched in horror as Israel, supported by Biden, committed genocide in Gaza, with no end in sight to the genocide, and no end in sight to the American support of Israel.

Even though the hope of a pact between Israel and Saudi Arabia appears diminished, still Saudi Arabia has left the door open to Israel, but with conditions to be met before realizing the dream of Netanyahu, which could have implications for regional stability and a potential reset in Middle Eastern politics.

## US-Israel Goal of Saudi-Israeli Pact

Shared security concerns have played a pivotal role in bringing Saudi Arabia and Israel closer in recent years. With Iran's expanding influence on the regional stage, both nations now recognize the necessity of cooperation to counter common threats to their national security. Covert intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, and discreet diplomatic communications have helped forge a new understanding between Riyadh and Tel Aviv.

Israel had a plan in which they would not make peace with the Palestinians, and would not give them freedom or human rights, but instead Israel would forge alliances with its Arab neighbors, thus by-passing the Palestinian issue.

With the US pressure on Middle Eastern countries under the Abraham Accords, the plan was successful, though limited to Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Sudan which have already normalized ties and set a precedent for Saudi Arabia to join the crowd.

## **Iran as a Threat**

Israel has always viewed Iran as 'enemy number one'. Iran's firm stance on support of the resistance to the occupation of Palestine has kept Israel attacking Iran in both words and military actions.

China stepped on to the Middle East diplomatic stage and successfully brokered a normalization pact between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This angered Israel and the US, as they were both using Iran as the threat to the Arab countries of the Middle East.

By all accounts, the peace has held between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Iran has said they will support any peace agreement that the Palestinian people make with Israel. If the US and Israel want to disarm, or dismantle the "Axis of Resistance" that Iran supports, then they need to settle on a peace deal between Israel and Palestine, and the resistance will be over, a thing of the past.

But, most political analysts on the Middle East have said that the US and Israel do not want any state, freedom, or human rights for Palestine. All the current rhetoric coming out of Washington about a two-state solution, and complying with decades old UN resolutions, is just empty talk and designed to buy time for the Netanyahu government to destroy Hamas, and empty Gaza.

## **AIPAC**

Saudi Arabia seeks normalization with Israel because of AIPAC, the Israel lobby which controls the US Congress, the Oval Office, and any politician with hopes of a long career.

The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy is a book by John Mearsheimer, Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, and Stephen Walt, Professor of International Relations at Harvard Kennedy School at Harvard University, published in late August 2007. It was a New York Times Best Seller.

Mearsheimer and Walt contend that the centerpiece of US Middle East policy is its intimate relationship with Israel, and the US commitment to Israel is due primarily to the activities of AIPAC.

The power of AIPAC over members of Congress is massive. Although there are many domestic lobbies, they differ from APIAC because AIPAC is working for a foreign government, and it is not always in the national interest of the US, which is demonstrated by the current US support of Israel while committing genocide in Gaza that has brought chaos across the US on campuses and streets, and diminished the reputation of the US abroad as a promoter of freedom and human rights.

Many in Congress have accused AIPAC campaign contributions for achieving bipartisan support for anything proposed by the Israeli government.

Political fundraising is a huge part of AIPAC's operation. One of the three top positions in its massive Washington, DC, headquarters is that of political director, who runs both the Washington political operation and receives an annual salary of about \$500,000.

## **Access to US Weapons and Defense Technologies**

If Saudi Arabia and Israel are together in the Abraham Accords, then Saudi Arabia can gain significant political leverage in Washington, DC. When the Kingdom needs weapons or defense technologies they won't have any struggles in Congress for approval. AIPAC will send its lobbyists to Capitol Hill, and like magic everything will be quickly approved for Riyadh. This is the chief perk of a Saudi-Israel pact.

## **Vision 2030**

Increasingly, Saudi Arabia has shifted its focus towards economic and infrastructural development under the ambitious Vision 2030 plan. Consequently, internal considerations and a desire for regional stability have compelled the Kingdom to reassess its stance on Israel. **Mohammed bin Salman**, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, has a vision of leading the Kingdom away from fossil fuels and into business and tourism. He needs regional peace and prosperity to achieve his goals.

The shared pursuit of regional influence and access to advanced technologies has fostered a strategic convergence between Saudi Arabia and Israel. Bilateral agreements in cybersecurity, water management, renewable energy, and health care have established significant economic and technological exchanges, ultimately benefiting both nations. This evolving cooperation creates a foundation for further collaboration across numerous sectors and provides a platform for modified geopolitical alliances in the region.

## **Free Palestinian**

On May 4, Saudi **Foreign Minister Prince Faisal Bin Farhan** reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's call for an immediate and lasting ceasefire, safe humanitarian corridors, and the fulfillment of Palestinians' legitimate rights, including their right to self-determination and an independent state.

He added, that Saudi Arabia has tirelessly worked, in collaboration with other nations, to protect civilians and provide relief in Palestine.

The Kingdom also renewed its call on the international community to intervene immediately to stop the genocide being perpetrated by Israel against unarmed civilians in the occupied Gaza Strip.

On May 6, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs voiced Saudi Arabia's warning of the dangers of targeting the city of Rafah. The ministry noted that Israel's violation of international law and international humanitarian law without deterrence exacerbates the humanitarian crisis and scuttles international peace efforts.

As the Saudi Arabia-Israel relationship continues to evolve, it has the potential to reshape the geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East. Shared security concerns, economic

opportunities, and the shifting Arab stance towards Israel have laid the groundwork for deeper cooperation. However, progress remains contingent on establishing a Palestinian state. Despite the obstacles ahead, a consequential reset in Middle Eastern politics appears possible and may foster a more stable, prosperous, and inclusive region.

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