

**Middle east and opportunities for India**

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On September 15, 2020 an historical event took place which could dramatically affect the political and economic situation in the Middle East. This event involved the signing of the peace treaties between Israel and two Arab countries UAE and Bahrain in the South Lawn of the White House. Unfortunately, due to the American News Media’s animosity towards President Trump, the news did not get much publicity.  After wowing to push Israelis into the ocean, first Egypt and then Jordan, the two Arabian countries recognized Israel and started business dealing with Israel. On September 13, 1993, in the Rose Garden of the White House, then President Clinton brokered a deal between Israel and Palestine.  There was a photo op showing Clinton, Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Yitzhak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel.  For this deal, both Arafat and Rabin received the Peace Nobel prize. Under this deal, Israel was to provide economic aid in exchange for the PLO recognizing Israel’s right to exist. However, later Arafat backed off from the deal and he wanted more concessions from Israel which Israel refused.  The Nobel prize winning deal was trashed.  That was a historic mistake on part of Arafat resulting in Palestine losing more land to Israel.  Now Palestine will never get this type of deal.  The animosity between Israel and the Arabian countries continued.  Then Iran came into the picture.

After repulsing Iraq’s attack, Iran strengthened its army and started enhancing its role in the Middle East by getting involved with Shiites in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria.  These actions raised concerns among the Arabian Countries, however, the real red flag was raised when Iran supported Shiites captured a large part of Yemen, a country next door to Saudi Arabia. There was also a terrorist attack by Shiites in Mecca, the heart of Saudi Arabia.  Not only Saudi Arabia got concerned about Iran’s political dominance, it got concerned about losing the control over Islam as once it had lost to Turkey which controlled Khilafat and even Mecca.

About three years ago, I visited Saudi Arabia and had a long and frank discussion with a very senior advisor of the Crown Prince.  The details of this meeting were included in the article I wrote in the Sunday Guardian, India.  This gentleman expressed grave concern about Iran and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism which Saudi Arabia had been financing for many years.  He stated that Saudi Arabia would stop financing Islamic fundamentalism including Madrassahs all over the world.  The advisor also mentioned that Saudi Arabia was working on enhancing its relationship with India vis-a-vis with Pakistan and Israel.  Not only Saudis realized the political advantage, it saw better economic opportunities.  
Soon other Arab countries including Saudi Arabia are expected to establish political and business relationships with Israel.  The political and business relationships with India are already at a very strong footing.  In spite of Palestine’s call for Muslim brotherhood, none of the Arab countries supported Pakistan’s position on Kashmir even after India abolished Article 370.

Now what about Palestine?  Being myself a refugee from Pakistan, I sympathize with Palestinians who had been pushed out of their homes in Israel.  Even after decades of armed struggle, massive political efforts and gaining the sympathy from many countries, Palestanians did not succeed to get back to their homes nor did they get an independent state. Had they tried to peacefully negotiate a deal with Israel and accepted the deal brokered by Clinton, they would have had an independent country which would have been recognized by Israel and the whole world.  Jerusalem would have remained accessible to both Palestinians and Israelis and Israel would have never moved its capital to Jerusalem.  Now, should Palestinians be left on their own?  The answer is no.  It is not known whether Trump has any intention of getting some concessions for Palestine from Israel.  He can do so in exchange for having Arabian Countries’ recognition of Israel.  If Mr. Trump does not do so, India can do it.  India has a good relationship with Israel and Palestine and should be able to get a deal between them.  Having been pushed to the walls and abandoned by Arabian Countries, Palestine could be convinced of agreeing to a reasonable deal.

After a nuclear deal was negotiated by President Obama between the U.S. and Iran, a deal also accepted by the Western Europe, the tension between Iran and the West eased significantly.  However, when President Trump got very concerned about Iran’s rising influence in Syria and Iraq, he cancelled the deal with Iran.  In response to Iran’s threatening position, Mr. Trump imposed economic sanctions against Iran. Nevertheless, both the U.S. and Iran are interested in cooling down the tension, but no one wants to take the initiative.  Again, India is friendly with both the countries and can broker a deal between the USA and Iran.  India can also have Iran and Arabian Countries to agree to a peaceful co-existence.  If India can do both of the above two deals, not only Mr. Modi would get a Nobel prize, India’ stature in the world would be at the highest level ever.  Even China will have to reconsider its hostilities with India.  Let us all hope, India and Mr. Modi will grab the golden opportunities offered to them.