



The Sabra Report

'Basic Framework' in Place for Israel-Saudi Normalization

Times of Israel, September 30th, 2023

Recap:

Israel and Saudi Arabia are moving toward a historic US-brokered deal to normalize relations.

The Context:

- ✧ Saudi Arabia has never recognized Israel and long insisted it would not do so without an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal. The Kingdom did not join the US-brokered Abraham Accords, which saw its Gulf neighbors Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates establish formal ties with Israel in 2020 [1]. US President Joe Biden hopes to transform the Middle East – and score an election-year diplomatic victory – by securing Riyadh's recognition of the Jewish state. Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman has made it a priority to transform the Kingdom's economy away from dependence on oil revenues into a hub for business, tourism, and culture.
- ✧ Terms of a potential deal include US-Saudi defense, nuclear and arm agreements as well as parallel peace discussions with Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) [2]. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu boasted that Israel was "at the cusp" of a transformative peace agreement that "will go a long way to ending the Arab Israeli conflict."
- ✧ Democratic senators say any diplomatic pact between Saudi Arabia and Israel would require a commitment from Israel to preserve "the option of a two-state solution" [3] - concessions that are beyond the scope of what Netanyahu's coalition is likely to approve [4]. Since it took office last year, Israel's government announced Israeli settlement expansions, making the prospects of a Palestinian state even more remote [5].
- ✧ Democrats also expressed concern over an overarching US-Saudi treaty since historically, security guarantees have only been provided to US allies and not "authoritarian regime[s] which regularly undermine U.S. interests in the region [6]." Full Democratic support is essential since Biden requires bi-partisan backing to secure 67 of 100 votes in the Senate to pass the treaty [7].

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Can an Israeli-Saudi Arabia deal be achieved independent of a US agreement?
- ✧ Could a peace agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel serve as the catalyst for most Arab states to normalize relations with Israel?
- ✧ Is an Israeli-Saudi Arabia deal feasible without first achieving an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement?
- ✧ Given the division of leadership between Hamas in Gaza and the PA in the West Bank, can either faction fully represent the Palestinian people in these discussions?

Notes:

1. [Gantz makes quiet visit to Washington amid Saudi normalization talks](#), Times of Israel, October 5th, 2023.
2. [US reps secretly visited Saudi Arabia to discuss Israel - report](#) Barak Ravid, Jerusalem Post, OCTOBER 4th, 2023.
3. [Democrats Tell Biden Saudi-Israel Pact Needs Concessions for Palestinians](#), Mark Mazzetti, New York Times, October 4th, 2023.
4. [Saudi deal should include West Bank settlement freeze - US Senators say](#), TOVAH LAZAROFF, Jerusalem Post, OCTOBER 4th, 2023.
5. [Democrats Tell Biden Saudi-Israel Pact Needs Concessions for Palestinians](#), Mark Mazzetti, New York Times, October 4th, 2023.
6. [20 Senate Democrats lay out conditions for Israel, Saudi Arabia peace](#), Laura Kelly, The Hill, October 4th, 2023.
7. [Saudi deal should include West Bank settlement freeze - US Senators say](#), TOVAH LAZAROFF, Jerusalem Post, OCTOBER 4th, 2023.

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