

CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



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**ABRAHAM ACCORD:
A SYNTHESIS OF US,
ISRAEL AND UAE
TRILOGY**



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The cusp of mid twentieth century saw return of Jews to their promised land in Palestine, a histo-mythological belief of reasonable credible evidence. The existence of Hebrew language as a common thread amongst the Jews living across the multi continental geographical spread as also Jewish settlements within the Arab lands of Palestine do convey a definite historical connect.

The mythological narrative of their persecution and consequent exodus from their habitat has some authenticity as the thought of returning to the Promised Land continued to exist over centuries. While ignoring of such a linkage would not be fair, so is the illegality of eviction of Muslim inhabitants to make way for Jews based on mythological justification. The displaced Palestinians within their own lands continue to be neglected and deprived of their legal rights. The concept of an independent Palestinian state is far from fructification and stands exposed to political manipulations by the powerful for their strategic purposes.

The influx of Jews into traditional Islamic habitat in the Palestine was seen as an act of war by the Muslims. It became an emotionally charged issue

for the Islamic fraternity irrespective of their divisive sectarian beliefs. It was after all an intrusion into their religious domain and an insult to sanctity of the idea of Ummah. The saga of turbulent and acrimonious co existence of the Arabs and Jews in the Palestinian landscape is cause of travails of instability of West Asia since birth of Israel. The protective patronage of the western powers to Israel has been the reason of their survival despite being surrounded by Islamic nations.

The Muslim anger manifested into three wars with the newly declared state of Israel, albeit resulting into military defeat and loss of substantial territories to the Jews. The survival instincts of Jews with do or die spirit prevailed over poorly coordinated operations despite tactical advantage of multi directional approaches and superiority of numbers. The Christian western powers provided all the support to the Israeli forces as it was their plan to settle the displaced Jews persecuted by the German Nazi fascists. All three religions that draw their lineage from the legendry Abraham were seen to be at war in the land considered holy by all of them.

With passage of time, the economy and security interests have prevailed over the primacy of emotional bond of Islamic ummah leading to centrifugal political leanings. The Muslim vs Jews cause was seen to be giving way to primacy of sectarian divide amongst the Islamic world in the maze of geo politics of oil and gas. The matter became more complex with ambitions of leadership of pan Islamic fraternity by rival Sunni and Shia groups. The historical differentials have little to do with the present day context wherein all nations are looking at economic buoyancy with prospects of depleting natural resources. The extra regional powers have been the catalyst in perpetuating the political instability and deep sectarian schism amongst the Islamic states with intransigent political strains

The pragmatic sense has prompted number of nations to accept existence of Israel as a reality which cannot be wished away. Egypt and Jordon have been the pioneers in accepting the factual position after having failed to change the political map through military force. The politico-economic strength of the US and her allies has forced them to mend the fences and

live in peace with Israel. It leaves Syria and Lebanon under patronage of Iran who are in state of cognitive conflict as part of their territories continue to be under Israeli occupation. Recently, Israel has declared their sovereignty over the Golan Heights in contravention of UN directions on its status. It has upped the ante further between Israel and Iran & Syria combined.

Iran, as the proponent of Islamic cause, has openly declared to abolish Israel from the face of earth as a carryover agenda of their Islamic revolution of 1979 under Ayatollah Khomeini. Moreover, Iran with her nuclear capabilities stands central to threat to both Israel as well as Sunni fraternity. While Israel continues to be an intruder for entire Islamic community, there seems to be a softening of stance amongst few Sunni nations due to common threat from Iran. In order to counter the Iranian threat, they have to depend on US and Israel combine for their security, hence reason of shift in their approach as a sensible option in the prevailing circumstances.

Apropos, Saudi Arab with her economic and security connect with the US is no longer critical of Israel and prefers to keep quiet. Similar political transformation is seen in UAE, Bahrain and Oman who are known to have unofficial links with the Israel. It is UAE an influential rich Arab country with modern outlook and pragmatic sense which has blinked to forge ahead to recognize Israel. **It is indeed a diplomatic bold move of strategic prudence against all the religious shackles with potential to change the political narrative of the West Asian landscape to usher in peace, prosperity and stability.**

Besides economic prospects and stronger linkages with the US, it is the security against nuclear Iran across the Persian Gulf that has prompted UAE to accept proposition to establish normal diplomatic relations with Israel. At the same time their precondition of Israel not to annex the West Bank territories of putative independent Palestinian state adds to their perceived diplomatic brownie point.

The UAE has indicated that they will not set up their embassy in Jerusalem until a final agreement is signed between Israel and Palestinians. Though Israel has agreed to suspend the issue but not to give up altogether, it is seen to be a positive step in the interest of Palestinians. It showcases UAE's success in contributing towards Islamic cause as against Iran who has done nothing other than vitiating the environment with their politico-religious intransigence.

The electoral promises by the Netanyahu to extend Israeli sovereignty over Jewish enclaves in the West Bank has drawn criticism as it is in contradiction with two nation theory, an accepted concept worldwide. Similarly, even US who had given support to this idea have been under criticism by international community. Therefore, the 'Abraham Accord' has bailed them out of an odd situation to their political comfort. It is a smart move wherein Israel created a leverage through an electoral promise which is now being used to get around Islamic fraternity to scale down their opposition in return of Israeli concessions in West Bank.

This agreement has given electoral advantage to the Prime Minister Netanyahu who commands a thin majority over a fragile coalition. Similarly, the US president Trump can now talk from position of strength as regards to part success of his foreign policy which does not have much to say as regards to China, North Korea, Iran and Afghanistan. Therefore, this agreement brokered by US seems to have been timed tactically for the right effects for internal as well as external environment. A win-win situation all the way for US, Israel and UAE.

The Palestine the main impacted party has rejected the agreement as it has nothing to offer to them. The Jewish encroachments over their lands continue to flourish and likely to be accorded legitimacy in the proposed US suggested peace plan. As far as Palestinians are concerned nothing has changed or likely to change on ground with the agreement between other three parties, albeit at their cost. **The agreement per se is meant for Palestinian cause and they are nowhere in it.** What has changed is a part modification to an electoral promise by an Israeli political party to annex

Palestinian lands. Hence, it is all an eye wash and betrayal of Palestinian interests.

Looking at the higher picture, this agreement has more to do with the strategic span of global geo politics. This new precedence would impact the entire West Asia as a catalyst to change the political configuration of the region and its extra regional connects. It has potential not only to bring down the ante against Israel but also may dilute the sectarian rivalry quotient in times to come. Going by the political indications, Saudi Arab, Bahrain and Oman are likely to follow soon to recognize Israel. Once this happens it would create a cascading effect in rest of the region, thereby aligning them into US lead political consortium.

The politico-military strength of such a dominant group would certainly make the Shiite fraternity to note the significance of such a change and may prompt them to review their obstinate stance. Iran, which is the main target of US and her sectarian rivals, would be under pressure to reconcile to the ground realities. The current economic sanctions over Iran have already inflicted lot of damage to their economy and any further increase in the ante would certainly impact them beyond resuscitation.

Iran in the current scenario is showing signs of pro China leanings which may not be in strategic interests of US given their ongoing cold war for supremacy. China is known to have agreed to invest \$ 400 billion for infrastructure and industrial development in Iran. Iran in return would be supplying energy resources to China on lucrative terms in defiance to US sanctions. Russia has good relations with Iran who has been supporting her in Syria and elsewhere. Therefore, there are fair chances that once US reduces her foot prints from the region, the strategic space may be occupied by Russia and China combined with Iran as the bridge head. It is certainly not what US would like to accept.

The president Trump seems to have seen the emerging political threat emanating from Iran- China combine. He is reported to have indicated for an agreement with Iran within 30 days as an electoral promise, if he comes

back to power. This may also be a move to counter the democrats who may restore US participation in the Iranian nuclear deal post elections. **It is also a fact that if present demand of complete roll back of Iranian nuclear programme is insisted upon, there are fair chances of losing out Iran for ever.**

There has been full compliance by Iran to follow laid down norms of the nuclear deal and all signatories except US continue to support the deal. Iran therefore enjoys the political support of other global big wigs and unlikely to scale down her stance. **However, looking at the new political convergences Iran may be deterred in her anti Israel and anti Sunni rivalry quotient.** In the changed scenario, Iran as well US may be amenable to a reasonable agreement to mend the fence. It would pave way for scaling down of military ante in the region including non state actors operating in grey zones who enjoy patronage of sectarian lobbies.

The Abraham accord is a small beginning, and 'a small step to cover a long journey' in conformity with Confucian philosophy. On the face of it, there seems to be a move to tide over few myopic immediate political objectives of the three parties concerned. Whereas, **its deep analysis points towards a window of opportunity for the entire region to push back the political intransigence mired in the historical emotional binds of medieval mindsets.** With easing of tensions and reconciliations across the board, the security apprehensions would gradually make space for primacy of economy as the driving force for development

The trilogy of US, Israel and UAE have paved the way by setting precedence for others to follow as it has positive synergies benefitting all in the region. However, **an early establishment of an independent state of Palestine with sovereign powers and territorial jurisdiction to the satisfaction of Islamic fraternity would be a pre requisite to take the idea of reconciliation forward.** In that, US as the anchor need to manage the emerging diplomatic opportunities keeping political sensitivities of all stake holders in mind. India with her good relations and economic connect with most of the countries is in a position to contribute towards taking this

positive political move forward. Indian diplomacy needs to be pro active to facilitate the process and be a party to usher in peace and prosperity in West Asia.

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