**Israel**

[Syed Haider Raza Mehdi](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/syed-haider-raza-mehdi/)

November 26, 2020

There are several dimensions to this issue, moral, legal as well as international, regional and Pakistani Geo-Political aspects and interests.

Morally and legally, Israel is guilty of usurping Palestinian rights for nearly 80 years, wreaking havoc on innocent people, akin to Nazi’s disenfranchisement of Jews in Europe.

Similarly, PM Modi, in India is following the Israeli model in redefining the legal status, geography and demography of Occupied Kashmir, disenfranchising Kashmiri Muslims and Indian Muslims, wreaking similar havoc and imposing draconian measures on them, very similar to what is happening to Palestinians under Israeli fascism.

On the International Geo political front, President Trump is desperate to seek a Foreign Policy win, even in  defeat, in attempting to persuade key Muslim countries to recognize Israel with an eye on his radicalized white support base and a potential 2024 Presidential run.

The two key Muslim countries he’s targeting are Saudi Arabia, the self styled leader of the Muslim world and Pakistan, the only Muslim Nuclear power.

Saudi Arabia has four factors aligned to USA interests, impacting its decision to recognize Israel.

1. Their very close ties to the Trump administration.
2. Their close yet unannounced close ties with Israel.
3. Their animosity with Iran and the stalled JCPA nuclear agreement between USA and Iran.
4. Finally, the Jamal Kashoggi murder.

But given that the Trump Presidency is now on its way out and the real possibility revival of the \*USA Iran Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action\* (JCPA) under a Biden Presidency, are likely factors stopping them from recognising Israel for now.

Most likely their bargaining chips under a Biden Presidency in exchange for recognising Israel will be for the USA not to revive the  JCPA with Iran, and personally very important for Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, for the USA to not reopen any investigations in the Jamal Kashoggi murder, allegedly under MBS’s direct orders.

Of course there will be significant internal consequences on our economy as large waves of migrant workers return and foreign remittances and financial assistance from KSA and UAE dries up.

Interestingly,  President Biden is on record to reviving the agreement with Iran and reopening the Jamal Kashoggi murder issue. So looking at these factors, it is unlikely that Saudi Arabia will recognize Israel now.

One can only conjecture on the details of PM Netanyahu’s visit to Saudi Arabia and meeting Prince Mohammad Bin Salman in the town of NEOM and also attended by USA Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, as announced by Israeli State media, but denied by Saudi Arabia.

Clearly there must have been major USA and Israeli offers to Saudi Arabia in exchange for recognizing Israel.

If we link this meeting between the three to the recent reports of President Trump seeking a briefing on militarily attacking Iran, one can postulate that this offer was also on the table and to be executed and implemented forthwith and during the remaining period of the Trump Presidency.

But it appears that Saudi Arabia, as much as it would like them to attack Iran, has apparently not fallen for the bait, and, as mentioned earlier, the wily Prince MBS will wait for Biden to take over before making any moves to recognize Israel and seeking his pound of less in return. JCPA and Kashoggi.

Pakistan is a huge prize for Israel, were we to recognize them.

It is now well known that in recent months, USA, UAE and Saudi Arabia have all directly attempted to pressurize and blackmail Pakistan to do so. When I say USA, it really is President Trump and in the case of KSA, Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman and for UAE, Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed. The last having told a very senior Pakistani government  functionary, a year or so ago and I quote, \*”Sir please do not request our support on Kashmir, we will only do what the USA tells us”\*

KSA and UAE pressure and blackmailing Pakistan, still reeling under tremendous economic pressure has taken the shape of calling in their loans, prematurely, not rolling over their oil financing facilities and forcing our migrant labor out of their countries.

Two other factors, in addition to recognizing Israel, impacting this pressure and blackmail on Pakistan by KSA and UAE are Pakistan’s progressively close ties with Turkey, considered by KSA a challenger to its desire to be seen as the leader of the Muslim world and Pakistan’s increasingly better ties with Iran.

Interestingly Pakistan has publicly supported the revival of the JCPA between USA and Iran. This was unequivocally stated by PM Imran in his recent speech to the SCO Summit.

I think in the long run, despite our current economic challenges, this cutting off the one sided relationship with KSA and UAE, not based on mutual interests but prone to blackmail, as we have now witnessed, is an excellent outcome for Pakistan. The worst has happened. So be it!

Of course there will be significant internal consequences on our economy as large waves of migrant workers return and foreign remittances and financial assistance from KSA and UAE dries up.

PM Imran and his administration has a massive challenge on their hands to address this and somehow seek interim avenues to bridge this financing gap.

Hence those who advocate Israeli recognition by Pakistan, leverage our economic challenges as one of the key factors do so.

While there is merit in this argument which may and likely will, accrue significant economic and financial, benefits, dividends and relief.

I belong to the camp which says an unequivocal NO to any Israeli recognition for now.

First the moral and legal argument.

Until and unless there is a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian issue in the shape of a two state solution based on UN resolutions and withdrawal of Israeli forces to pre-1967 borders.

This means an Independent contiguous Palestinian not the moth eaten Palestinian state advocated by PM Netanyahu or the “Isareli Nazi like” ghetto called the West Bank and the freedom for Palestinian to exercise their rights of self determination!

Were we to do so now, would be kissing goodbye to our principled stand on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, whitewashing PM Modi’s atrocities in Occupied Kashmir and burying the Kashmiri UN resolutions and most importantly becoming partners to the Nazi like atrocities of both Israel and India.

The second relates to Muslim world leadership.

Pakistan, despite its poor economic condition, occupies a major leadership role and respect across a large part of the Muslim world.

This image and view has considerably improved since PM Imran came into office.

The fact that his speech at the United Nations was the most watched speech of any leader of any country, including President Trump, who was the second most viewed, is a testimony to this assertion.

Our recognition of Israel, without a just and comprehensive settlement will likely be followed by others and sign the death knell of any possible solutions to the Palestine and Kashmir issues and similar situations across the globe.

Thirdly we must not and should not succumb to blackmail and pressure by a US President on his way out and two dynastic Princes, desperately trying to preserve their family rule in KSA and UAE, by signing a deal with the proverbial “Devil’!

Finally, Iran is a neigbour. Our long term interests and prosperity is linked to good neighborly ties with them and all our neighbors including China, Afghanistan and India. Afghanistan is beginning to happen, as is Iran. China is rock solid. Only India remains. But very limited possibilities with Modi in power. So our relationship with Iran is crucial, especially economically and this includes CPEC, as it likely comes out of the cold under a Biden Presidency.

If anything is shaky it’s not Iran but the Al Saud and Bin Zayed dynasties. Iran is a neighbour and here to stay.

Pakistan will, Insha Allah, survive the blackmail and economic pressure, despite its temporary economic situation. Not easy! But will!

What little I know of PM Imran, the recognition of Israel is not happening! Period! Guaranteed!

Many of us don’t understand the depth of his pain and conviction for the poor, the exploited & the deprived, within or outside Pakistan.

I think he and we should only start reviewing the possible recognition of Israel, after there’s a just, fair and comprehensive settlement acceptable to the Palestinians!

Not before that!

And if for some reason, PM Imran were to succumb to international pressure and blackmail and recognize Israel, now, he will be committing permanent political suicide!