**Saudi-Israeli normalisation**

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 Too much of the commentary about a possible US-engi­neered Saudi-Israel normal­ization has been based more on hyperbole than reality. Such an agreement would, no doubt, be consequential, but let’s look realistical­ly at some exaggerated claims being made.

It will end the Arab-Is­raeli conflict.

It most decidedly will not. Arabs have long made clear that the conflict isn’t existential. The central issue has always been Pal­estinian rights. Even in countries that have made peace with Israel, public opinion is supportive, be­lieving it may give their govern­ments more leverage to end the violence and advance Palestinian rights. Despite regional weariness, Arab publics are outraged when Is­rael commits new atrocities or vi­olates Muslim rights in Jerusalem.

This will change the map of the Middle East.

[Lawyers gird up their loins to press ECP to hold elections within 90 days](https://www.nation.com.pk/08-Sep-2023/lawyers-gird-up-their-loins-to-press-ecp-to-hold-elections-within-90-days)

It’s already changed. The once powerful military-led Arab “Re­publics” have lost their regional dominance, with leadership shift­ing to the Arab Gulf.

Saudi Arabia and UAE are deep­ening economic ties with China, re­maining neutral on Ukraine, and re­opening diplomatic ties with Iran. Pursuing ambitious economic de­velopment and societal goals, they seek regional stability and calm.

Israel and the US want to off­set China’s growing role, return­ing Saudi Arabia and the UAE to an exclusive US orbit and challenging Iran as a united front.

This is a disaster for the Pales­tinians.

It would have no consequential impact on the Palestinians’ plight. Arab states have limited lever­age over Israeli behavior. Agree­ments made in the lead-up to the Madrid Conference, Oslo Accords, Arab Peace Initiative, and Abraha­mic Accords made no difference. Israel continues to gobble up Pal­estinian land, build new settle­ments, and brutally violate Pales­tinian rights. If the US wanted to make Arab-Israeli peace a reali­ty, it would use its diplomatic and political capital to do so.

[Pak Army backs govt plans to curb all illegal activities hampering economic growth](https://www.nation.com.pk/08-Sep-2023/pak-army-backs-govt-plans-to-curb-all-illegal-activities-hampering-economic-growth)

If Saudi Arabia holds out for terms including a real end to the occupation and the US pushes this process forward, it might have a positive impact on Palestinians’ future. If, however, normaliza­tion moves forward without any­thing positive for Palestinians, it wouldn’t be a disaster—just same old, same old.

This spells the end of the two-state solution.

That ship has already sailed. No conceivable government can be formed in Israel, now or in the foreseeable future, that would al­low for the minimum require­ments of an independent, sover­eign, viable Palestinian state.

Those calling for a Palestinian “state” refuse to recognize the re­alities created by Israel’s massive settlement and Jewish-only in­frastructure making Palestinian independence and sovereignty impossible.

[PM says nationwide crackdown against smuggling yielding positive results](https://www.nation.com.pk/08-Sep-2023/pm-says-nationwide-crackdown-against-smuggling-yielding-positive-results)

With Palestinian Arabs compris­ing slightly more than one-half of the population between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea and increasingly integrated into the Israeli economy, with Israe­li settlements, infrastructure, “se­curity zones,” checkpoints, and Is­raeli Apartheid policies, we’re in a one-state reality. It’ll be a long hard slog to end Israeli repression and secure Palestinian equal rights—a reality that must be addressed.

This will give Biden a much-needed victory before the 2024 elections.

While the Saudi-Israel normal­ization being touted in the press is doubtful, any agreement won’t add five votes to the Biden col­umn in 2024. Democrats and Re­publicans are deeply polarized, and independent swing voters won’t be moved foreign policy is­sues—except for Ukraine. Jewish voters will overwhelmingly sup­port the Democratic nominee be­cause of the GOP’s domestic poli­cies. And while Jewish voters may be concerned with Israel’s future, their growing unease with the current Israeli government means they won’t be impressed with any White House celebration that puts Netanyahu centerstage.

[Violence-weary Chitrali people stage ‘Peace March’](https://www.nation.com.pk/08-Sep-2023/violence-weary-chitrali-people-stage-peace-march)

Can any form of Saudi-Israel normalization even happen giv­en current Israeli and American politics? Leaders in Netanyahu’s coalition and the opposition are clearly unwilling to agree to Sau­di Arabia’s insistence to process nuclear materials and desire to purchase advanced US military equipment. Nor will they enter­tain even modest concessions re­garding Palestinian rights.

While Republicans would be loath to support an agreement that would enhance Biden’s elec­tion year standing, the President will find limited support among Democrats for concessions to Saudi Arabia on nuclear or mili­tary hardware.

Bottom line: It’s time to end the hyperventilating over the pros­pects of a Saudi-Israel normal­ization agreement. The US should embrace the new realities of a changing Middle East in which Is­rael is an outlier and should ac­cept its responsibility as the en­abler of the Israeli occupation and its Apartheid system.