**Armageddon Creeps On - PART-I**

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Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, had described the area of the promised Jewish state or land to be “from the brook (River Nile) of Egypt to the Euphrates” (Iraq).
Oded Yinon, reputedly a former senior official with the Israeli Foreign Ministry and journalist for the Jerusalem Post, wrote an article in 1982, “A Strategy for Israel in the 1980s”. The Association of Arab-American University Graduates found it to be a compelling article that gave out the Zionist strategy and vision for the ME.
What Oded Yinon set down in the 1980s appears to have been more than prophetic as the ME/GMER seems to be evolving quite as he had envisaged and strategised!
Oded Yinon premised his strategy on two essential fundamentals; one, Israel must become an imperial regional power and two, it must cause the division of the whole area into small states by the dissolution of all existing Arab states, (a balkanization of its neighborhood!). Consequently, he wrote, that the Zionist hope would be that the sectarian-based states become Israel’s satellites and ironically its source of moral legitimation. This implied that they were not planning for an Arab world but a world of Arab fragments; creating “a mosaic of ethnic and confessional groupings, that would readily succumb to Israeli hegemony”. Every kind of inter-Arab confrontation, he thought, would be to the advantage of Israel. He further stated that the policy’s immediate aim ought to be the dissolution of the military capabilities of the Arab states East of Israel while the primary long-term goal should work towards the formation of unique areas defined in terms of ethno-national and religious identities.
About North Africa he felt that Algeria and Morocco were quarrelling and too embroiled in domestic troubles. Militant Islam threatened Tunisia. An uncertain Muammar Qaddafi sought power in unification with Syria and Egypt. In later years, the US infamously “led from behind” as France and GB attacked Libya. Muammar Qaddafi was killed in the process. Sudan, a multiethnic country now stands divided into Northern and Southern Sudan.
He laid out a blueprint for the ME/GMER too. He thought that the 1978 Peace Treaty with Egypt was a mistake which needed to be rectified. Israel’s aims, he suggested, ought to be the dismemberment of Egypt, to regain Sinai Peninsula and its fossil fuel riches and create a Christian Coptic state on its northern border. Yinon suggested that Israeli policy should aim at the “liquidation of Jordan as ruled by the Hashemite Kingdom; and ensure Palestinian migration from the West Bank into eastern Jordan”. Ariel Sharon’s long-term strategy too aimed at the same objective. What he meant was that after the Hashemite Kingdom had been dissolved, the dense concentrations of Palestinians in the territories Israel had captured in the 1967 war would be pushed into the erstwhile Kingdom and space (Lebensraum?) would be created for the Israelis between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean. That would keep the Arabs on the East of the River Jordan and the Israelis to the West of it.
Iraq, with its enormous oil wealth, was considered as Israel’s primary threat. Here a Sunni minority was ruling over a Shiite majority. Yinon believed that the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) would split up Iraq whose dissolution ought to be the strategic aim of Israel. The US and its international Coalitions thereafter attacked Iraq twice, in 1990-91 and 2003 and devastated it beyond recognition, eventually ensuring Saddam Hussain’s death. Yinon had envisaged the emergence of three ethnic centers in Iraq - Shiites governing from Basra, Sunnis from Baghdad and the Kurds from Mosul. Syria was expected to implode too where a Shiite Alawi minority (12%) was ruling the Sunni majority. He expected a Shiite Alawi state along its coast, a Sunni state in the Aleppo area, another mutually hostile Sunni state in Damascus and a Druze state in the Golan, Hauran and northern Jordan. Kuwait’s indigenous population, he said, was only 25 % of its total strength. Bahrain had a Sunni minority ruling over a Shiite majority. UAE, Oman and Yemen had large Sunni majorities. He noted that a sizeable part of the Saudi population comprised of Egyptians and Yemenites while the Saudis were in power although a minority.
These were, amongst others, the fault lines in the Muslim-Arab world that he highlighted could be exploited by Israel. A look at today’s ME reveals that Yonin’s plan seems to have been materialised to a very large extent. It appears to be a strategy still in progress. Today, Egypt and Jordan stand neutralised through peace deals and treaties, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon are largely destroyed through remorseless military offensives and stand generally divided and split up as envisaged. Palestinians are now reduced to the Gaza strip and some parts of the West Bank. Abraham Accords have got the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and a couple of other Muslim countries to recognise Israel. They stand neutralised.
Once the Gulf Arab states have been duly neutralised then perhaps the Armageddon will creep towards Iran and ominously further East of it too!
(To be continued)