**The Middle East in 2020**

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A decade ago, in early 2011, the Middle East region unexpectedly erupted. A mass outcry popularly known as the “Arab Spring”, against the authoritarian system, stretching from Tunisia to Yemen, soon turned into a popular revolution. It was a struggle for no-existent rights where people protested against their rulers, for the restoration of democracy, constitutional supremacy, an elected legislature, and freedom of the press. These authoritarian rulers had been around for decades. For example, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia had been in power since 1987 (14 years); Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak of Egypt, since 1981 (28 years), and Syrian Bashar Hafez al-Assad and his father since 1971 (40 years). The mass movements soon gained momentum and were able to overthrow the Tunisian, Egyptian and Yemeni dictators, while others held their ground, turning their countries into a continuous theatre of civil wars, with no end in sight. In fact, every country responded according to its socio-tribal composition.

[Pakistan reports 1,048 new coronavirus cases in one day](https://nation.com.pk/15-Feb-2021/pakistan-reports-1-048-new-coronavirus-cases-in-one-day)

Although it has been a decade since the movement started, except for Tunisia, which was able to construct its political system on democratic principles, no other society of the Middle East region has been able to achieve its objectives of a functional democracy. Yemen, Syria, and Libya are still embroiled in vicious civil wars, tearing their societies apart, inflicting heavy damage. Most important of all, the human suffering is enormous, due to external military interventions, in the form of indiscriminate bombing, killing children and targeting schools, hospitals, and even civil gatherings. By any definition, a good part of the region is facing the worst ever humanitarian crises. Although the Syrian situation has become less volatile, reconstruction, integration of the country and foreign intervention poses a gigantic challenge.

Similarly, another war-torn theatre remains in Yemen, where the situation continued to deteriorate in 2020, because of the involvement of more parties in the ongoing conflict. For example, although north Yemen is in full control of the Houthis, but in the South, a war goes on within a war. Both factions have now settled for an uneasy coalition government, with Aden as its capital. Recently, keeping the sufferings of the Yemenis in mind, the newly-elected US government of President Joe Biden cancelled an arms deal worth $478 million precision-guided 7,500 smart bombs to Saudi Arabia’s military. Similar action was taken against the UAE.

[Motorway closed after dense engulfs parts of Punjab](https://nation.com.pk/15-Feb-2021/lahore-abdul-hakim-motorway-closed-as-fog-blankets-parts-of-punjab)

In 2020, President Trump promoted the “Abraham Peace Accord”, initially joined by Israel, Bahrain, and the UAE and later by Morocco. The real intention of this arrangement is to sabotage and sidetrack the demands of the Palestinians to have a homeland of their own, according to numerous resolutions of the United Nations and the Oslo Peace Accord of 1993. Palestine is altogether ignored in this whole process with the result that unless this issue is resolved, no peace effort and development in the region could be long-term and achievable.

Although new alliances started to take shape in the Middle East, it is yet to be appraised of the strategy the newly elected Biden administration would adopt towards the Middle East region. It is expected from the new US president that he would detach himself from Trump’s extremist rhetoric and revisit the nuclear deal with Iran, while Saudi Arabia and the UAE are in limbo, struggling to realign their national interests in the unforeseeable Middle East.