

Israel's New Alliances: A Dance With the Devil or Winning Respect?

During the time when King Saul was pursuing David and his men, David decided to fight alongside their sworn enemies, the Philistines, with the chieftain Achish. The temporary alliance didn't last long, but it had its uses.

"The enemy of my enemy is my friend." This ancient tradition makes for temporary alliances and often times long-term coexistence. Mutual danger and the abandonment by former friends and allies move antagonists to re-examine their original arguments and decide that the clear and present danger of an outside hostile force threatens all equally.

As the United States pursues its full speed withdrawal from the Middle East, former enemies are finding that the danger from Iran is mutual. Israel now finds itself under a large tent with Saudi Arabia Egypt and Jordan and the Gulf States.

Saudi Arabia's stance is the most surprising. The Wahhabi branch of Islam is the most extreme in its observances and prohibition of non-Muslim faiths. Egypt and Jordan have a Christian and Jewish heritage back thousands of years. Yet the savvy Saudis know when to emphasize the Wahhabi concepts and when survival takes precedence.

The relationships with these three Muslim nations have been works in progress since Israel's founding in 1948. Even as Zionist settlers began to arrive in numbers in the late 19th century, they were accepted within the Ottoman Empire. After the Balfour Declaration Emir Faisal had complimentary words for the Jewish agriculturalists and intellectuals.

Egypt has been a place associated with the God of Abraham,

Isaac and Jacob since the time of Abraham. The Jewish colony in Alexandria, the Coptic Church and even after the Muslim conquest an off and on tolerance of Christian and Jews has endured mostly intact.

The attacks in 1948, the Suez War, Six Day War and Yom Kippur War all convinced Nasser and Sadat that Israel was too solid, too motivated to ever surrender. A treaty was signed and even in today's post "Arab Spring" environment endures.

Jordan was carved out of the British Mandate and after participating in the Arab wars against Israel reached the same opinion as Egypt. A treaty that benefits both nations has endured and now Jordan sees Israel as an ally as the United States deserts its allies and friends and nominates the aggressive Iranians as its heir in the region.

The Saudis occupy a unique position in the region. The Wahhabi branch of Islam is perhaps the most conservative of all Muslim sects and Sharia Law is applied as Government policy. The nation has over 100 beheading executions to date this year.

The State's modern founder ibn Saud was a warrior king and a Machiavellian by nature. He married off his 50 sons and 55 daughters to former enemies and established a family-ruled kingdom which today balances modern business and technology with the reformation-based concepts of Wahhabi.

King Salman, like his predecessors on the throne, has instigated a quiet relationship with Israel that has developed into a necessary alliance as Iranian-supported forces in Yemen and the region threaten dominance.

Other Arab nations such as Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates are adapting their ways to allow other religions into their borders. Abu Dhabi recently permitted a new Catholic Church to be built, the second in the Gulf nation. There are over 900,000 Catholics in the Nation.

Israel's example as a small nation, fully committed to its laws which guarantee freedoms not considered in neighboring nations, has gradually turned hostility into respect and acceptance. Israel's moving east as America and Europe allow anti-Israel and anti-Semitism to grow is a step that will help ensure the Nation's political existence.

America's deserting Israel resembles Saul's pursuit of the new anointed King. David hid among the enemy until Saul no longer sought him. After the civil war between Saul's and David's forces David once again took arms against Israel's enemies. Saul was once a king, but David's House endures.

Until America and Europe come to their Biblical senses, Israel will work and fight with its former enemies. Perhaps a tolerance will grow into respect and triumph.

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