

What You Need to Know About Israel's New 'Middle East Coalition'

The ceremony at the White House this week where the island nation of Bahrain established diplomatic relations with Israel comes on the heels of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) agreeing last week to also sign the accord.

Both nations are participating in the signing ceremony at the White House. This brings the total of Muslim-majority nations in the Middle East who now recognize Israel to four: Bahrain, the UAE, Egypt and Jordan.

These latest events are the first such agreements in that troubled part of the world in 40 years. The significance of these new accords cannot be overstated.

I lived in Bahrain for almost a year in military service and visited the UAE. In both countries I noted how much the people there valued the United States and were decidedly pro-American. I became friends with Crown Prince Ahmed Al-Khalifa of Bahrain; over and over (as we worked together daily in support of U.S. personnel and Bahraini troops), Ahmed stressed the long-term strategic importance of Bahrain's relationship with the United States. Bahrain and the UAE are reliable allies and both countries are very "Western," as opposed to some of the stricter Islamic nations.

However, the history of this region of the world is one where, no matter how valuable the relationship with the USA might be, there was no compromise in their anti-Israel sentiments. Now all indications are there are more Arab countries in the region which are prepared to follow the example of Bahrain and the UAE and also establish official relations with Israel. How and why is this all coming about?

There are a number of factors that have changed the calculus in the Middle East:

First, it has become clear that the real threat to peace and security in the region is not Israel; rather, it is Iran and its malign behavior and support of terrorism. Iran is an existential threat not only to Israel—but to all of the nations there, including the Gulf States.

Iran has actively worked to overthrow the royal family and government in Bahrain. (Notably, when Bahrain cracked down on the Iran-backed insurgents in Bahrain, then-President Obama canceled the sale of F-16 fighter planes to Bahrain. It is a weapons platform that is critical to Bahrain's security. Thankfully, President Trump reversed that decision.) The common threat of Iran to the nations in that part of the world is uniting the nations there and Israel is viewed as a key ally.

Second, it has been the policy of the United States for decades by both Republican and Democrat administrations to attempt to bring about peace by funneling financial and verbal support to the Palestinians. All of these efforts have failed. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which was established in 1964, is a terrorist organization. It has the blood of thousands of people on its hands. They have reneged on every peace proposal for decades.

The Madrid Conference in 1991 where the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist (belied by their continuing efforts to kill Israeli citizens) was officially revoked by the Palestinian Central Council in 2018. Every compromise by Israel has been rebuffed or met with additional demands from the Palestinians. Palestinian officials at times seem to refuse to take "Yes" as the answer to their demands. The U.N. still considers the PLO to be an official representative of the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian Authority (PA), which technically rules over all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, is rife with corruption. It continues to give stipends to imprisoned terrorists who kill Jews and offers additional financial support to the families of terrorists who die in their attempts to kill Israeli and U.S. citizens in the area. The PA has lost control of Gaza, which is now administered by Hamas, an internationally recognized terrorist organization.

Both the PA and the PLO embrace armed struggle as a tactic to claim all of what they call Palestine, a land area that includes all of the nation of Israel. When Iranians and some Palestinians chant "Death to Israel" and "Death to the United States," they mean it.

The efforts of the U.S. and its allies to bring about peace (even a two-state solution) have repeatedly failed. Why? Because placating terrorism and corruption simply does not work. What the Trump administration has brought to the table is a strategy of strength, honesty and a refusal to look the other way when representatives of the Palestinian people lie, break promises or commit acts of violence. It is also a policy of unapologetic support for Israel, the only democracy in the region. It is a strategy that works. Nations in the region are weary of the Palestinian problem, with its subterfuge and endless controversy. Additionally, Hamas and Hezbollah (both supported by Iran) are bad actors in the area. They are a threat to peace and stability to all of the nations in that area.

The present U.S. administration's strategy of strength and refusing to compromise with terror works. It is living up to the adage concerning America: "No better friend. No more formidable adversary." Peace through candor and strength is effective.

The Abraham Accords with Bahrain and the UAE mean there is a real chance for lasting peace in the region. Israel is no

longer isolated in the Middle East. Bahrain and the UAE now join with Egypt and Jordan in establishing trade, travel and security cooperation with Israel. Additionally, for the first time, Saudi Arabia (which for the time being does not have diplomatic relations with Israel) is openly allowing Israel to use Saudi airspace for overflights when its planes fly to other countries. Saudi Arabia has been cooperating for some time with Israel on matters of national security for both nations.

The Middle East is still a volatile part of the world. Iran continues to sow discord, threats and violence. There are malevolent actors in every nation there. But, for the first time in a long time, there is hope for true peace in the region. It is a cause for celebration and anticipation of better days to come. {eoa}

For the original article, visit .