Would a Biden Presidency Destabilize the Middle East?

While many Americans are concerned about the specter of four years of a Biden presidency, few stop to think about how his election will affect the Middle East.

President Trump's Abraham Accords, the normalization of relationships between Israel and the three Muslim countries of the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Sudan are achievements that Aaron David Miller, a senior diplomatic adviser on Israeli-Palestinian issues and no fan of Trump's, called "significant and redemptive."

Miller went on to say that "they [the administration] deserve credit, even though they jumped on a bus that had already left the station."

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At least five other Arab nations are interested in signing deals, including Saudi Arabia. A Bahraini diplomat told the Israel Hayom news outlet that a Trump victory would result in a "flood of moderate Arab and Muslim countries" signing peace agreements.

According to Mossad director Yossi Cohen, normalizations between Saudi Arabia and Israel were "imminent and likely to be confirmed after the election, if Trump wins."

Cohen stated that "a Biden victory will see many of the countries that are currently exploring the possibility of normalizing relations [with Israel] take a step back and revisit the risk they are taking."

The reason for this is Biden's promise to return to Obama-era agreement with the Shia Muslims of Iran and the ill-fated Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal. In an op-ed for CNN, Biden promised, "I will offer Tehran a credible path back to diplomacy. If Iran returns to strict compliance with the nuclear deal, the United States will rejoin the agreement as a starting point for follow-on negotiations." His offer is after the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that Iran had openly violated every JCPOA restriction.

With Biden and the Democrats believing that Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is moderate, there may be a rush to restart the JCPOA since Rouhani's term in office ends in the summer of 2021. The original JCPOA deal released over $100 Billion in Iranian funds and allowed them to increase oil sales. Much of this money, Iran's critics claim, went right into funding terrorism.

Renewing the treaty could destabilize the Middle East. The arms embargo (UN Security Council Resolution 2231) banning Iran from importing weapons from countries such as China and Russia expired in October 2020. This will allow Iran to "feed their proxy terror groups by matériel transfers," according to UANI (United Against Nuclear Iran) CEO Ambassador Mark D. Wallace.

This arms embargo's expiration will have immediate destabilizing consequences for Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Israel. Terror organizations such as the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps,

the al-Aqsa Brigade, Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Houthi rebels in Yemen are the likely beneficiaries of this sunset provision. Such arms' availability to these groups may increase the number of funds regional countries allocate for their defense budgets.

Iran's ability to buy new weapons and ship them to its terrorist allies will significantly affect the beleaguered states of Iraq and Yemen.

Biden has called for the end of U..S support for the Saudi war in Yemen against Iran-backed and anti-American Houthi rebels, further increasing Iran's military influence. Simultaneously, Biden resurrecting the JCPOA will allow Iran to begin exporting two million barrels per day of Iranian crude oil, further depressing the world price and impacting the Saudi economy.

A Biden presidency could also be a disaster for Iraq. Following the assassination of Qassem Suleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, a substantial anti-Iran movement has developed among the Shia within Iraqi under the new Prime Minister, Mustafa al-Kadhim. The death of Qassem Suleimani hurt Iran's ability to control Iraq and intimidated Ali Khamenei enough to have so far avoided direct terrorism against the United States.

Iran-backed militia attacks on Iraqi citizens have turned the Iraqi people against Iran, even as the United States pulls its troops out of the country. Biden's normalization of Iran relations will undermine those who have worked to free Iraq from Iran's clutches. A revived Iran will be harder to dislodge from Iraq, further destabilizing the area.

Israeli Settlements Minister Tzachi Hanegbi warned:

> Biden has said openly for a long time that he will go back to the nuclear agreement; I see that as something that will lead to a confrontation between Israel and Iran. If Biden stays with that policy, there will, in the end, be a violent confrontation between Israel and Iran.

Iran's push for war with Israel and dominance in the Middle East may well continue to bring Israel and the Gulf Arab states together, even as U.S. involvement in the region ebbs. If so, this alliance could counter an Iran grown powerful by the same man whose policies enable ISIS to rise.

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