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Israeli security and military objectives from the UAE deal

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Day after day, the Israeli objectives from its normalization agreement with the UAE and Bahrain become clearer; as these objectives have surpassed achievement of economic gains to fulfilling military and security ambitions. In coincidence with signing the normalization deal, there were Israeli statements about likely establishment of military bases in the Gulf, Bab el-Mandab and the Red Sea, or at least benefiting from the UAE bases scattered there. This may help Israel achieve a number of its long-term goals, whether in pursuing Iranian influence or in obstructing any arms supplies to the Palestinian resistance.

Among the key motives behind the above assumptions is the information revealed by prominent Israeli political figures that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hides some details of the deal signed with the UAE and Bahrain. It is apparent that Netanyahu signed the agreement with the UAE and Bahrain without sharing the Knesset, the foreign affairs committee, or even the security cabinet, which indicates ambiguity, vagueness and lack of transparency on the deal.

Confronting Iran

The key Israeli security and military benefits from the so-called "Abraham Agreement" with the UAE and Bahrain include boosting Israel's security interest against the Iranian-Qatari-Turkish front, and giving Tel Aviv great strategic advantages in this regard.

The normalization agreements with the UAE and Bahrain may enhance Israel's desperate efforts to expand its capabilities strategically and geographically in confrontation with Iran, and allow opening an important economic and technological market with Gulf countries, and gradually escalating Israel's interests after removing most restrictions. It is true that the UAE are small countries, but they have a strong economy. Both the UAE and Bahrain are extremely hostile to Iran, Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood, which goes in line with the Israeli position, and greatly serves the Israeli interests. The secret private relations between Israel and the UAE, including intelligence and arms deals, have come to the surface with revealing that Tel Aviv has sold intelligence equipment and F-16 fighter jets to Abu Dhabi.

UAE purchase of arms

Over the past twenty years, the UAE has sought to acquire the largest possible quantities of weapons with hundreds of billions of dollars from the United States. It was also remarkable that the Israeli "Elbit Systems" company for military industries had sold combat equipment to the UAE that had not had diplomatic relations with Israel.

Also, the NSO Group Technologies, a Herzliya-based Israeli technology firm, sold Abu Dhabi the Pegasus spyware that enables the remote surveillance of smartphones, with the aim of hacking phones of its political opponents and obtaining their personal information, to avoid accusations of human rights violation. Note that NSO Group Technologies is known for its relations with many repressive regimes in the world, including Myanmar.

Another company that sold Abu Dhabi intelligence spyware is Verint Systems, where its relationship with Abu Dhabi arose a decade and a half ago under the auspices of the Israeli security establishment that imposed a barrier of secrecy and ambiguity around it, before it was revealed by Mati Kochavi, the Israeli businessman, during a lecture in Singapore.

As for Israeli businessman Avi Leumi, the founder and CEO of Aeronautics Defense System (ADS), based in Cyprus; and David Meidan, the a former Mossad official, who served as personal representative of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal with Hamas in 2011; they are currently working as representatives for Israeli Aerospace industries in Abu Dhabi.

Libya and Sinai

There is another advantage for the UAE-Israeli cooperation related to the activity of the Emirati Air Force in Sinai to assist Sisi in his war against the armed groups there, where Israel also assists him by providing security information and launching attacks by combat aircraft. In addition, the UAE Air Force helps its Egyptian counterpart in the Libyan war in support of General Khalifa Haftar, whose representatives had met with Israelis earlier.

Over time, a close alliance arose, linking the UAE with Sisi, who considers the Muslim Brotherhood his bitter enemy, with Saudi Arabia to a lesser level, and with Israel, which finds itself in confrontation with Hamas, the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.

It is true that the growing relations between Israel and Abu Dhabi constitute one of the motives for Netanyahu to brag about from time to time in his ability to achieve a breakthrough in the Arab world with the moderate countries, of which the UAE is a part, along with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Morocco, Egypt and Jordan; but the essence of their bilateral relations lies in the security and intelligence cooperation and arms deals, concluded behind closed doors.

The Emirati-Israeli agreement included many clauses with security and military dimensions, which stipulates bilateral cooperation in these areas, and their pledge “to take important measures to prevent the use of their territories in carrying out any hostile attack targeting the other party; and that each side will not support any hostile operations in the territory of the other party; in addition to the bilateral security coordination, and enhancing their military and security relationship”.

These precisely formulated articles have increased the assumptions that Israel is likely to benefit from the Emirati military bases in the region, whether in the Persian Gulf, Bab el-Mandab, or the Red Sea, up to the establishment of an Israeli military base in the UAE, as well as Tel Aviv’s use of the Emirati waters, and the possibility of proceeding with this path for consolidating its foothold in Socotra, Bab el-Mandab strait and Djibouti.

Strategic bases

The talk about the possibility of an Israeli military presence in Emirati bases, or the establishment of Israeli military bases in the Gulf region, is not a product of the moment; and because such arrangements take a long time, it is certain that this issue had been previously discussed between Israel and the UAE before it was announced.

Note that Iran will not stand silent on the Emirati-Israeli move; therefore the situation in the Gulf region is likely to escalate, given the fact that Iran is present almost everywhere in the region through the Revolutionary Guard or its sleeping armed cells; and that long arm may constitute a factor of exhaustion for these Israeli bases in the Gulf.

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Former Israeli Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz has revealed that Israel is part of a military coalition led by the United States to protect the security of navigation in the Persian Gulf, ... as the security of navigation in the Gulf is a purely Israeli interest within the strategy of "curbing the Iranian threat" and strengthening Israeli relationship with the Gulf countries. This Israeli role in the coalition is securing navigation in Bab el-Mandab strait through proliferation of Israeli warships equipped with missiles.

According to the Israeli-UAE agreement, the hands of the Mossad will be officially free in the Gulf countries, especially the UAE, amid security and intelligence cooperation to confront any threats to Israel, through the Israeli military presence in the UAE military bases, or the establishment of Israeli military bases within the UAE borders.

Moreover, Israel aims, behind the agreement, to gain control over the most important sea straits in the region, belonging to the Emirates and Saudi Arabia, which enhances expansion of its military and strategic influence. An official document issued by the Israeli Ministry of Intelligence revealed that the agreement with Abu Dhabi paves the way for intensifying military cooperation between them in the Red Sea, amid Israeli desire to expand security cooperation in the region to strengthen the military alliance between them, including massive Israeli military action, especially across the countries of the Horn of Africa, most notably Ethiopia, to prevent the Red Sea from turning into an Arab or Islamic lake. Meanwhile, Israeli military production companies are striving to increase their defense exports to the United Arab Emirates .

Israeli high-tech and internet companies have participated in events in the Gulf countries over the past decade, but now, after the Emirati-Israeli agreement, their activities will be publicly announced, including military industries, and companies operating in the fields of agriculture, water and food technology, making the agreement a real Israeli achievement, considering the Emirati major funds on the one hand, and a "zero" Israeli cost on the other, especially at the level of cyber companies: defense and offensive, where Israeli Defense Export Controls Agency (DECA) checks every transaction with the UAE and other Gulf countries.

Israel and Yemen

In coincidence with signing the normalization agreement between the UAE and Israel, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the UAE and Israel had agreed to build a security and military alliance against Iran to protect American interests and the Middle East, and to increase security and intelligence cooperation to confront what he called "terrorism".

At the same time, Israel has not neglected targeting Yemen, as it is the gateway to controlling the Bab el-Mandab Strait, sharing the same desire with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iran. Through controlling the Bab el-Mandab strait, Israel also aims to tighten the screws on the Palestinian resistance and prevent the export of weapons to Palestinians via the Red Sea. This confirms that the most important provisions of the Emirati-Israeli agreement to Israel are those provisions related to security and military relations, where Israel is working to exploit them in increasing its influence in the Gulf region and the Red Sea.

In light of the UAE's efforts to control in the Persian Gulf with the support of the United States and Israel, there is a joint Israeli and Emirati action in Yemen to establish military bases and areas of joint influence, especially the establishment of a military base on the island of Socotra, which makes Israel an influential power there, especially if it manages to extend its control on the Bab el-Mandab strait, which represents an important lifeline for the countries of the Red Sea basin, and international trade from Asia to the Middle East. Moreover, the scattered American bases in the Gulf region and the Israeli coordination with the US army would enable Israel to carry out any military action in the region, if it wanted.

Harming Suez Canal

On the economic side, the agreement between the UAE and Israel is expected to leave its negative effects on traffic through the Egyptian Suez Canal, because one of the immediate outcomes of normalization between the UAE and Israel was an agreement signed between the Dubai Ports World company and the Israeli Dover Tower company, to develop ports and free zones, and to open a direct shipping line between the Israeli Red Sea port of Eilat and Jebel Ali port in Dubai, in preparation for building trade lines between them along with other countries, to facilitate and improve business in the region, through the establishment of a joint venture for Haifa Port.

Because most of the Gulf countries' exports are petroleum products, a shipping line linking the port of Eilat in the Red Sea and the port of Ashkelon in the Mediterranean would allow transporting oil from the Gulf to Europe, without the need to pass through Egypt's Suez Canal, constituting a real challenge to the canal, as 17% of the Suez Canal revenues come from the passing oil tankers.

In addition, the railway linking the port of Eilat on the Red Sea to the port of Ashdod on the Mediterranean can also be seen as an inland hub port; and under the Emirati-Israeli normalization agreement, this railway will extend east to the Arab Gulf states via Jordan, to transport goods coming from Europe and the United States via Israel, without the need to pass through the Suez Canal, which will be the second challenge to the Egyptian waterway.

The third challenge is the fact that Israel has become a strong competitor to Egypt in the field of gas. After the UAE agreement with Israel, Israel will not need to liquefy its gas in Egyptian liquefaction plants, as UAE liquefaction plants will be built in Israel for the export of its gas to Europe, which will increase the conflict of interests between the port of Jebel Ali and the Egyptian port of Ain Sokhna, both of which are subjected to the DP World company.

Winning the Israeli crown

The Israelis noted the Egyptian concern that Abu Dhabi would win a more advanced position than the Sisi regime in each party's relations with Tel Aviv. While Itzhak Levanon, the former Israeli ambassador to Egypt, has revealed that Cairo fears Abu Dhabi may win a more advanced position than Cairo in Tel Aviv, Zvi Bar'el, an Israeli Middle Eastern affairs analyst, claimed that Sisi is afraid that Mohammed bin Zayed may steal the Israeli crown from him, where the regional center of interest would move from Cairo to Abu Dhabi. As for the Washington Institute for Near East Studies, it said that Sisi is concerned about the UAE agreement, fearing that he may be removed from his role as the main interlocutor with Israel.

It is no secret to Egyptians that the UAE is seeking to control developments in the region via its agreement with Israel, as it controls the Yemeni arena, and seeks to share Egypt's influence in Libya. However, Israel prefers the economic influence of the UAE that imposes its presence more than Egypt, which may reposition Abu Dhabi in the Palestinian arena. Abu Dhabi may seek, with Israeli

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coordination, to pump its money and economic aid into Gaza, to increase its influence through its ally, Mohamed Dahlan.

Despite its official hail of the Emirati-Israeli agreement, Egypt is afraid of a decline in its functional role, and the loss of all arenas in favor of the UAE. While Egypt fears that Israel may play a hostile role in the file of the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, its concerns have increased with the decline of its influence in Sudan in favor of the growing Emirati influence there. There are fears that Egypt may make serious concessions to Israel to preserve its regional role.

New Egyptian fears have also emerged after the Emirati-Israeli agreement, due to the great openness in the relations of Tel Aviv and Abu Dhabi, and transformation of the UAE into a regional center for Israeli companies and the Mossad apparatus, which threatens to Egyptian security, given the presence of one million Egyptians working in the UAE. The Israeli-Emirati agreement is likely to turn the Abu Dhabi into a new intelligence operations theater for the Mossad, which prompted consultations within the Egyptian Intelligence Service to create a department concerned with the Israeli presence in the Gulf to pursue Tel Aviv's activities that may target or harm Cairo's interests.

Israel has achieved many long-term security, military and strategic benefits from its normalization accords with the UAE and Bahrain, beyond the economic and commercial gains, despite their importance, which required hiding some articles of the deal and keeping them confidential, to avoid harming Israel, the UAE, or any other parties.