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Israel is unzipping Iran and Iraq



Israel like many other countries has had a love-hate view of Iran and Iraq over the years. Israel like other countries has never managed to befriend both at the same time. Indeed, others have sought to promote conflict between Iran and Iraq to assist in establishing a regional balance. Israel finds favor in this because so long as Israel's adversaries are engaged in a conflict with other than Israel is usually ignored as a target.

Israel and Iran are at logger-heads so it wouldn't come as a surprise that Israel should try to befriend Iraq. It is already known that Israel and the Kurds have a good working relationship and share mutual interests about the fate of Syria. But as with all other Arab states, having a good working relationship be it economic or even weapons sales don't mean that they will recognize Israel as the Jewish National Homeland or even agree to formal diplomatic relations. These states have little intention of making peace a reality.

It was recently revealed that several Iraqi delegations visited Israel in 2018 but it would be too optimistic to read too much into these about the future of Iraqi-Israeli relations. Formal diplomatic ties aka a peace treaty with Iraq remains very far away. Not the least because there is a strong Iranian Shia influence in the government of Baghdad and Teheran has come to dominate many areas of Iraq through its proxy Shiite militias ever since Saddam's downfall.

This doesn't prevent influential Sunni and Shiite Iranian figures, including sitting members of parliament, from travelling to Jerusalem often telling their colleagues that the purpose is to make a pilgrimage to the sites holy to Islam. It would be delusional for any Israeli authority to think that this is not in reality the true reason. There is a tendency for Israelis, because they would like to be at peace with their neighbors to jump to quick conclusions and try to force an issue that might need to wait for the next generation.

Experience has already shown that decades of negotiations have cast doubts on the concessions required for what turns out to be a false peace. The 40-years-long peace with Egypt is very cold, and peace ties with Jordan are at a rough spot following Amman's refusal to renew part of the 1994 peace treaty that allows Israel to lease two small areas of land – Naharaim in the northern Jordan Valley and Ghamr in the south. In the case of immediately after the overthrow of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in 2003, dozens of Iraqi parliamentarians visited Israel, including MP Mithal Alusi but a short while

later, he was kicked out of parliament and his two children were murdered. So nothing has come of that since.

It is evident that Arab states in the Middle East and Persian Gulf are only interested in making peace or even just trading Israel when they are in distress, having learned how to acquire Israeli aid through empty promises of future peaceful relations. The examples of this abound. In the 1980s, the Lebanese Christians sold Israel the illusion of a future peace that would be made possible once the Palestinian terror organizations had been expelled from Lebanon. This, among other things, led to the outbreak of the 1982 Lebanon war, and the outcome of that misadventure is well-known.

In my opinion the visit by Iraqi officials focused on the topic of Syria in the hope of getting Israeli aid or at least support in return for hollow promises of a future peace and diplomatic relations, paying the same kind of lip service paid by the Lebanese Christians in the 1980s and most recently by the Syrian opposition. In my opinion as adamant as Israeli policymakers claim to be about learning from past experiences, they should at the very least read the present situation correctly. Diplomatic relations between Israel and Iraq are light years away. Both Iran and Iraq are enemies. The best option for Israel is to continue to play one against another both in Syria and ferment them to intervene in each other's countries. Keeping Arab states at war with each other is more important than recognition or diplomatic relations.

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