



A regional organization for a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East

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I would like to zoom in on the geopolitics of the current context and what does it mean for the Zone. There are new dynamics in the region that could be characterized as leaning more towards dialogue and pragmatism rather than confrontation.

I will focus on three main developments:

- 1- Starting from the Abraham accords that were concluded in the Summer of 2020 between Israel, and some of the Arab states starting with the United Arab Emirates followed by Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan. Although the prospects for enlarging these accords to include other Arab states are not clear yet particularly that Biden administration made little progress in advancing these normalization agreements, what we got from the media reports that more states might join soon. The Accords resulted in rapprochement between Israel and some Arab countries, particularly the UAE, on various levels, however, they have not become a game changer yet in the security dynamics of the region and probably will not unless the Palestinian issue has been tackled. Yet I believe that the accords are an opportunity to break away from the traditional dilemma of peace and normalization versus disarmament first.
- 2- The second development is: Saudi Arabia and Iran are showing signs of warming relations starting from the breakthrough talks that were held in Baghdad since April. There are media reports about multiple rounds of talks that were held since then between top officials from both countries, nothing tangible has been announced yet. I think there is a better chance for an agreement now given that both parties see the importance of reaching a compromise as the only way out unless something happened and changed the course of events drastically.

Along the same lines, we saw a regional summit taking place in Iraq last summer where friends and rival countries attended. This summit is very significant signaling that states in the region even rival states seem to realize that there is no choice but to reach a compromise.

- 3- Lastly, I will be very brief here: the fallout from events and the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan which sent a clear message about Biden's administration approach towards other key regions in the world, including the Middle East. Consistent with its recent moves in Afghanistan, the Biden administration has signaled that it seeks to limit its direct involvement in the Middle East. To what extent the U.S. will manage to distance itself, it remains to be seen, however, it definitely changes the dynamics in the region.

To wrap up I am not being overly optimistic here ignoring the complexity of the region and the challenges that it faces, what I am trying to say is that the region is witnessing new dynamics, such dynamics are leaning towards dialogue, pragmatism and compromises, which have the potential to be an opportunity to change the narrative on the Zone opening the door for fresh round of talks that break away from the traditional narrative.