Fikra Forum

The Emerging Abraham Accords: The Challenges of Positive Change

Yoel Guzansky and Kobi Michael / September 25, 2020

Israel and the UAE have just embarked on a process that, assuming it matures successfully, will soon yield the fruit of full normalization between the two counties. The media coverage of the process has been largely optimistic, occasionally mentioning potential pitfalls regarding annexation and arms sales. Missing from this public and media discourse, however, are a host of other significant challenges this agreement may pose for Israel, the UAE, and to the region as a whole.

Since the August 13 trilateral (U.S.-UAE-Israel) announcement of the deal, the general media narrative about the normalization process has so far centered on the deal's dividends and benefits. Currently, the only obstacles to implementation frequently mentioned in the media are Israel's questionable commitment to freezing West Bank annexation and the possibility that the UAE will gain access to the advanced F-35 combat aircraft.

The discourse surrounding Bahrain-Israeli agreement has been different. For Bahrain—a small, Shia-majority country sandwiched between Qatar and Saudi Arabia—it is likely that continued American backing vis-à-vis Iran and an ongoing U.S. military presence in and around the tiny island played a bigger role in bringing the small Gulf nation into the agreement.

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