

**The Palestinian Authority Is playing on the normalization court - Opinion**

The United States administration is working to implement a regional initiative that includes Israeli-Saudi normalization. What would be the impacts on the region?

By Yoel Guzansky and Ude Dekel / October 4, 2023

The Palestinian issue is expected to command a more central role in the talks between Saudi Arabia and Israel on normalization, compared to earlier assessments or expectations by the Israeli government. The normalization should be seen as an opportunity to save Israel from the steep slope down which it is sliding toward a one-state reality (a situation opposed by a majority of the Israeli public), by means of political, geographic, and demographic separation from the Palestinians, to ensure Israel's character as a secure Jewish and democratic state.

Saudi Arabia is committed to the Palestinian cause for three main reasons: the importance of the issue for Saudi Arabia as the leader of the Arab-Muslim world; the demands that the Biden administration is expected to present to Israel to preserve the two-state option; and the understanding by Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas that he will gain more than he loses if he joins the move, contrary to his policy regarding the Abraham Accords. However, it is difficult to expect the current Israeli government to realize the opportunity presented by normalization with Saudi Arabia in order to save itself from a political impasse. The Netanyahu government will be hard pressed to stop the moves toward annexation that are creating a reality of one state, and instead enjoy significant benefits from the Saudis and other Arab states for promoting moves toward separation from the Palestinians, leading to two distinct entities.

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