Saudi Arabia’s Relations With Israel With The Prospect Of Palestine

Saudi Arabia does not have any official diplomatic relations with Israel but their relations are not that simple; rather overtaken by complex and controversial patterns. Since its emergence, Israel has fought eight recognized wars and in almost all of them, Saudi Arabia has either directly or indirectly joined against Israel. The reason behind this is simple, Saudi Arabia along with other Arab countries do not have any Jewish state among them and especially one craved out of their own lands. The region of Syria and Palestine became a point of disagreement between and Hussein bin Ali, leader of the Arab Revolt in World War I.

As the leader of the Muslim world (Middle-East) Saudi Arabia had always felt it a duty to eradicate the Zionist existence on Arab lands and therefore, openly sent help in terms of both resources and troops against Israel in the Six-Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur war (1973). However, Israel was able to defend itself both the times and even expanded- it more than doubled its size given to it originally in 1947.

In the later years of 1970s, many Arab countries accepted Israel and signed treaties. Saudi Arabia was still among the many who didn’t accept Israel because of the issue of Palestinian crises including refugees and lands taken by Israel.

However, at around the same time, Saudi Arabia emerged as the main power in the region mainly because of the increase in oil demand internationally and increase in its prices. Coming into power, Saudi’s policies changed in favor of regional peace and stability. As the Arab-Israel issue (Palestine issue) was the main hurdle, Saudi Arabia took practical steps to resolve the issue once and for all. Therefore, it took the first step in 1981 via the “Eight-Point Fahd Plan” given by the then Crown Prince Fahd to resolve the Arab-Israel conflict and get an independent Palestine. Although much infamous among the masses got support and appreciation internationally specially from Europeans. A version of Fahd Plan was presented at the “Twelfth Arab Summit Conference held in Fez, Morocco in 1982 which came to be known as Fez Initiative. Once again His Highness Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz at the “Annual Arab League Summit” in Beirut called upon Israel for peace and to resolve the Palestinian issue, the. Although, Israel ignored or rejected these proposals, this gave a new pattern to Saudi Arabia-Israel relations and Arab-Israel relations as a whole.

Saudi Arabia wants peace in the region and with Israel specifically, because being the leader of Middle East and Arab world, the have to directly confronts Israel in case of a war. Secondly and most importantly they want peace with Israel because of their increasing relations and common enmity that is another growing regional power, Iran.

The downfall of Saddam Hussein of Iraq removed a Sunni Arab strategic counterweight to Shia Iran. As a result Iran has much influence and control over Iraq now and a platform to further expand its influence and Shia empowerment in the region- as far as Syria. Simply put this Persian Shia intrusion deep into the Arab land puts in question the power and authority of Saudi Arabia and so a direct clash of interests.

Israel too is worried by the increasing Iranian presence around its borders, therefore bringing the two together- Saudi Arabia and Israel. They both bitterly opposes the Nuclear program of Iran. Hence, there is increase in their ties against Iran under the policy of “ Enemy of my enemy is my friend”.

Their co-operation and ties are secret and in shadows only occasionally do they bring it in the open as in November 2017, Israeli Chief of Staff, General Gadi Eisenkot said in an interview with UK based Saudi newspaper, Elaph, that Israel was ready to exchange intelligence with Saudi in order to confront Iran. Also acts like Israel’s open support to Saudi Prince Muhammad bin Salman in the Jamal Khashoggi case indicates the increasing ties between the two.

However, the still far from transparent Saudi-Israel relations can not be brought to open without improvement of Palestinian issue but nonetheless are allies in the shadows owing to their similar interests and aims.