



[The Saudi Israeli Deal and the Biden Administration's Fiasco](#)

By Jacob Van Veldhuizen

There has been a lot of news recently surrounding the ongoing normalization negotiations between Saudi Arabia and Israel. Most Western media outlets have covered the negotiations through a positive lens, but the stark reality is the harm that would come from such an agreement far outweighs the benefits. This is not because normalization between the two countries would be inherently bad, but because the conditions Saudi Arabia demands would destabilize the region and harm U.S. interests.

Saudi Arabia's 3 core demands to normalize relations with Israel include the signing of a mutual defense contract between the United States and itself, the reopening of talks between Palestine and Israel, and that the United States supply Saudi Arabia with nuclear technology for "peaceful" purposes. Saudi Arabia can make these outlandish demands because it currently holds the most power in negotiations. They do not have the same sense of urgency as the other negotiating parties. One of the reasons the United States is currently escalating its campaign for normalization is that Biden desperately needs a foreign policy win to give him a boost in polling numbers before the upcoming 2024 elections. The administration does not currently have any major foreign policy achievements to boast. Israel would benefit from the deal because it would eliminate a number of perceived security threats. It would also be a much-needed political victory for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is also in a reasonably precarious political position. Saudi Arabia would also benefit economically and politically from normalization but is not under the same time constraints.

A mutual defense contract between the United States and Saudi Arabia would be a disaster. Not only does it undermine Biden's broader foreign policy, but it also opens the door for all sorts of conflicts that the US could get forced into. This would escalate tensions in the region between Iran and Saudi Arabia. It would also give a major propaganda victory to China and Russia.

Giving nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia would be an incredibly dangerous path to go down as well. Though this would be subjected to close international supervision, it would be foolish to think that this technology would only be used for peaceful purposes. There is historical precedence. India acquired its nuclear weapons under the same pretenses. Saudi Arabia's acquisition of nuclear weapons would increase the potential for a dangerous global conflict involving the likes of Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. The US would almost certainly be dragged into this conflict. With so many actors involved, many of them armed with functional nuclear weapons, this conflict would also have a high probability of developing into a nuclear war.

Combining these two things would amount to an unacceptable risk of the United States being forced into another large conflict in the Middle East. Iran would not accept a nuclear-capable Saudi Arabia. If the deal were to be signed as is, it would halt any negotiations to revive the JCPOA and likely cause Iran to accelerate its nuclear program. Though Iran and Saudi Arabia have recently normalized relations, they can just as easily renege from this agreement.

It is also very likely that Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) will continue to draw these negotiations out to see the result of the 2024 elections. This may at least partially explain his It is well known that MBS and Biden are not fans of each other. In the past, Biden has made calls to make the crown prince a global pariah and has criticized him for the country's poor human rights practices. The quasi-leader of Saudi Arabia doesn't have a history of being a forgiving person. Bin-Salman will wait and see who wins the election and act accordingly from that point. If Trump wins, negotiations will likely proceed quickly to a deal. Trump has deep financial connections and a positive relationship with MBS, which will surely be exploited. If Biden wins, some type of normalization deal will still likely be passed, but right now it is more advantageous for the Saudi government to sit and wait and see the outcome of the 2024 presidential elections.

No matter the outcome of the election, the agreement is still not a sure thing. There are multiple outstanding issues that could still sink negotiations. One factor to consider is the diplomatic pressure from Iran. They have recently been putting out statements in strong opposition to any normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Riyadh will have to weigh the pros and cons of normalizing with Israel at the cost of recent improvements with Iran. Another more important factor is Saudi Arabia's demands concerning Palestine. Netanyahu is not likely to budge on this as if he makes any concessions, he will likely lose his position as prime minister. He depends on support from settlers to maintain his power. Agreeing to anything that would halt or otherwise obstruct the expansion of settlements would lose him this support. MBS has said that a solution to the Palestinian issue is necessary for a normalization agreement to be signed. It does remain to be seen if this will actually be a controlling factor in negotiations, as MBS has used the Palestinian issue to posture before.

This deal is simply not a good one. There are too many moving parts and even if those moving parts still somehow align, it is not a good option. It is a poor attempt to fix a problem by creating another one. It is not in American interests and would not lead to peace in the Middle. There is a way and will to normalize relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, but this is not it.