

Iran's Rouhani Doesn't Like the UAE's "Normalization" of Ties with Israel

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Iran's President Hassan Rouhani has delivered himself of some unsurprising harsh remarks about the UAE's willingness to normalize relations with Israel. His fury is evident [here](#).

The United Arab Emirates made a "huge mistake" by taking steps toward normalization with Israel, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said in a televised speech on Saturday.

For its part, Iran's powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps vowed there would be dangerous consequences for the UAE, and that the deal was [would] accelerate Israel's demise. The IRGC, designated a terrorist organization by the US, called the deal a "shameful" agreement and an "evil action" that was underwritten by the US, and said it would bring a "dangerous future" for the Emirati government.

If the deal will “accelerate Israel’s demise,” shouldn’t it then be welcomed with open arms by Tehran? Isn’t the real fear that the new acceptance by the UAE makes Israel more formidable than before, for it is now normalizing relations with a very rich and powerful Arab state with which it will have close links in a half-dozen areas, including technology, trade, tourism, agriculture, medicine, and, of course, defense?

Rouhani additionally warned the UAE against allowing Israel to have a “foothold in the region,” the Reuters news agency reported.

Too late, President Rouhani. Israel already has a “foothold” in the region. For several years it has been an ally in defense matters with both the UAE and Saudi Arabia, against Iran, and with Egypt, for it has long been supplying the Egyptians with intelligence about regrouped members of both Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in the Sinai, and has, with Egypt’s permission, even bombed sites belonging to those two terror groups.

“[The UAE] better be mindful. They have committed a huge mistake, a treacherous act. We hope they will realize this and abandon this wrong path,” Rouhani said.

The UAE has decided to further its own interests, and to stop dancing to the Palestinian tune that has prevented it, and many other Arab states, from taking advantage of what Israel has to offer. Abu Dhabi has calculated that has a great deal to gain, beyond that of an alliance against Iran, from normalizing ties with the Jewish state. It can benefit from Israeli advances in technology, agriculture, water management, medicine, cybersecurity, solar energy, laser anti-missile defense, and much more. The UAE would like, too, to increase trade and tourism with the Jewish state – as it tries to diversify its economy – to the obvious benefit to both

countries. It would naturally like to benefit by working with Israel – including supplying capital for its researchers – on dealing with the coronavirus pandemic. Israel is one of the world leaders in improved testing, in treatment of those already affected, and in the development of vaccines.

Iran has “historically been the protector of its neighbors and ensurer of the security of the Persian Gulf,” Rouhani said, noting the Emirates apparently thought the agreement could help guarantee security.

Iran has “historically been the protector of its neighbors”? What can Rouhani be thinking of? When did Iran “protect its neighbors”? Iran is currently “protecting” its neighbors by having the IRGC meddle militarily in Iraq, supporting Shi’a militias that constantly threaten the stability of the government. Iran been the “protector” of Bahrain by whipping up violent opposition by Shi’a to their Sunni ruler. It has “protected” the internationally-recognized government of Yemen by giving aid to the rebel Houthis trying to overthrow it. Iran helps “protect” Saudi Arabia by hurling missiles at its oil installations. Iran “protects” Syria by sending troops to help Bashir Assad, the despot who is fighting 80% of his population, in his nine-year civil war, to remain in power. Iran has helped “protect” Lebanon by building up the terror group Hezbollah, that has dragged that country into a war with Israel in 2006 that the Lebanese did not want, and that now, as a state-within-a-state, it continues to prop up a political system that, through its mismanagement and corruption, has brought Lebanon to financial ruin. Please explain to us, President Rouhani, just how Iran has “been the protector of its neighbors.”

What about in the Persian Gulf itself? Has Iran been, as Rouhani claims, the “ensurer of security” in that waterway? Iranian forces have attacked at least eight oil tankers, several of them belonging to Saudi Arabia; IRGC naval forces

have attempted to impede a British vessel traversing the Strait of Hormuz; the Iranians shot down an American drone flying over the Gulf; Iranian small vessels have swarmed around much larger Western ships to threaten them, slowing down their movement; in July 2019 the Iranians seized the British-flagged oil tanker Stena Impero and impounded it for two months. And there is much more the Iranians have done to harass, if not halt, vessels traversing the Gulf of Hormuz. Does that sound like Iran has “ensured the security” of the Gulf? Isn’t Iran, in fact, the main belligerent in the Persian Gulf, attacking, seizing, forcibly diverting, and halting oil tanker traffic?

...“Why then did it happen now? If it weren’t a wrong deal, why was it then announced in a third country, in America? So a gentleman in Washington wins votes, you betray your country, your people, Muslims and the Arab world?” Rouhani said.

The deal for normalization of relations was announced in the U.S., by the Americans, because it was they who played the key mediating role. And if the news helps Trump politically does that somehow make the deal illegitimate? They announced the deal not according to some insidious calendrical calculation, as Rouhani insinuates, but only when it was well and truly complete, had been vetted by, and met with satisfaction from, both sides.

The UAE, Israel and the US issued a joint statement on Thursday announcing an agreement on “the full normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates.” The Emirates presented the move, which was bitterly rejected by the Palestinian Authority, as an achievement for West Bank Palestinians, in that it halts Israel’s plans to annex parts of the territory.

It was understandable that the UAE would present its normalization of ties to Israel in the best light possible for

the Palestinians – describing it as a way to have Israel commit to not annexing parts of the West Bank. This conceivable halt-to-future-annexation made no impression on the Palestinians, who will not be satisfied with anything less than Israel being made to squeeze back within the 1949 armistice lines, with a nine-mile-wide waist at Qalqilya – what Abba Eban once described as the “lines of Auschwitz,” and Lord Caradon, author of U.N. Resolution 242, dismissed as a “horrible line” that only represented where the armies stood when the guns fell silent.

The deal means Israel and the UAE are expected to further collaborate to counter the influence of Iran, a shared nemesis.

Of course Israel and the UAE will collaborate, as they have long been doing, against Iran, only even more openly and unapologetically than before. This, of course, infuriates Rouhani.

In addition to the speech by Rouhani, the IRGC said that the “shameful agreement” between Jerusalem and the UAE would accelerate the process of the “annihilation” of Israel...

“Not only will [it] bear no achievement for the American-Zionist-Saudi triangle, but it will also accelerate the destruction of the murderous Zionist regime,” read the statement, according to the semiofficial Mehr news agency.

Rouhani is – not for the first time – illogical in his assertions. The agreement between the UAE and Israel for a “normalization of relations” is, he insists, awful, terrible, “one of the biggest historical betrayals against the ideals of al-Quds,” a “treacherous act” by the UAE, to whom we Iranians appeal to rethink its policy. Yet this “shameful agreement” will accelerate the process of Israel’s “annihilation, will further the destruction of the “murderous Zionist regime.”

Isn't that exactly what Iran wants? Shouldn't it, then, be quietly satisfied with, instead of denouncing, the UAE's policy of normalizing relations with Israel? That policy hastens the end of the "Zionist regime"? What could be better?

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