



MIDDLE EAST WEEKLY

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Middle East in a Week

Regarding international relations and world politics, the Middle East may be the most controversial region in the current times. On the one hand it sits on most of the world's oil reserves, while on the other hand, it inhibits the followers of the most controversial religion in the world, Islam. These matters combined have created a region filled with drastic events. Every day, there are new wars erupting in the region and every day, there are new ways through which the west and the far east try to increase their influence in the region. This region inhibits 411 million people out of which 28 % are under the age of 25 years old. This newsletter tries to give weekly updates on the important issues in the Middle East and combining them with some analysis, hopes to have a role in changing the region's situation to the better.

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UN ENDEAVOURING FOR PEACE IN LIBYA¹

In hope of a permanent cease fire, Libyan military leaders got together on Monday October 19th at a meeting in Geneva. This meeting marks the fourth round of talks involving the Joint Military Commission under the watch of the head of the United Nations support mission for Libya, former US State Department official Stephanie Williams. The meetings make up the security aspect of three-track talks, also involving political and economic tracks, that are aimed to lift Libya out of its grueling conflict that has ground on nearly ever since the fall of Muammar Qaddafi in 2011. Last month, the two sides reached preliminary agreements to exchange prisoners and open up air and land transit across the country's divided territory. This breakthrough also accompanied with the resumption of oil production. Fighting has died down amid international pressure on both sides to avert an attack on the strategic city of Sirte, the gateway to Libya's major oil export terminals.



THE UNITED STATES BECOMING THE WHITE KNIGHT OF YEMEN²

WASHINGTON—On Aug. 11, 2017, a United Arab Emirates helicopter filled with soldiers taking part in an offensive against al Qaeda militants crashed in Yemen, leaving three soldiers dead and seven seriously wounded, including a young member of the royal family. General Correa, then defense attaché at the US Embassy in Abu Dhabi, coordinated the risky 2017 mission, leading to the celebration of the young royal's return six months later. The rescue mission made General Correa a hero among Emirati leaders, including Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, the ruler of the country, who is also the uncle and stepfather of the injured soldier rescued by the Americans That day. General Correa's close relationship with the Emirati leadership became an unforeseen asset in the Trump administration's secret talks between Israel and the United Arab Emirates that led to the historic peace accords – known as the Abrahamic Accords. – signed last month at the White House.

ISRAEL, ONE STEP CLOSER IN RULING THE MIDDLE EAST³

On Sunday October 18th, 2020, Bahrain and Israel signed an agreement which allowed for the two states to have official diplomatic relations henceforth. For decades, most Arab states have boycotted Israel, insisting they would only establish ties after the Palestinian dispute was settled. However, the current wave of normalizations begs to differ. Bahrain is now the fourth Arab country in the Middle East - after the UAE, Egypt and Jordan - to recognize Israel since its founding in 1948. At a ceremony in Manama on Sunday evening, Bahraini and Israeli officials signed a "joint communiqué" establishing full diplomatic relations. The two countries are now expected to open embassies. Following the signing, Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani said in a speech that he hoped for "fruitful bilateral co-operation in every field" between the two nations. He also called for peace in the region, including a two-state solution to the Palestinian conflict. A solution which given the vast invasion of the area by Israel, seems a bit farfetched.



US THREATS AGAINST IRAN SEEM TO HAVE NO END⁵

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned Sunday that the United States will slap sanctions on any individual or entity that assists Iran's weapons program, a move that will likely further aggravate tensions between Washington and Tehran. "For the past 10 years, countries have refrained from selling weapons to Iran under various UN measures. Any country that now challenges this prohibition will be very clearly choosing to fuel conflict and tension over promoting peace and security," Pompeo said in a Sunday statement. "Any nation that sells weapons to Iran is impoverishing the Iranian people by enabling the regime's diversion of funds away from the people and toward the regime's military aims," he added. Such comments seem absurd since Iran had a considerable military power already as it has shown on several occasions in the Middle East. Besides, given the current US sanction on Iran's banks, how exactly is Iran to have trade with other states?



YEMEN'S WOMEN TO THE RESCUE⁴

“The role of women was housework only,” said Huda Othman Hassan, a young woman from Abs, a rural district in the north of Yemen, near the border with Saudi Arabia. “Although we are educated and university graduates, we had no decision-making power and couldn’t work in any field.” But now a new project is helping shift those norms. Last year, Othman and nine other women in Abs set up a solar microgrid, just 32km (20 miles) from the front line in a war that has killed tens of thousands and left more than 3.3 million people displaced. The project is one of three the United Nations Development Programme helped put in place in front line off-grid communities in the country. The Abs station is the only one run entirely by women. Before the Abs station was built, Othman says, the high price of commercial electricity meant her community was unable to access it. “Most people used a flashlight or a five-watt bulb on a small battery,” she says. Yemen ranks at the bottom of the UN gender equality index and there are very limited work opportunities for women, especially in rural areas. But for the group managing this project in Abs, the work has been transformative.



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