

## ***The US-Israel Nexus in Middle East: Role of Religion and an Analysis of Regional Geo-Political Dynamics***

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### ***Abstract***

*Middle East is sacrosanct for being birthplace of three religions as Islam, Christian and Jews and is termed as cradle of civilizations. For strategists its strategic significance is inevitable due to its epicenter, the Persian Gulf. Events in Middle East directly affect economy and security of not only the West but also the world at large. Recently the region is ridden with political, religious and security turmoil.*

*The geopolitical dynamics got transformed after 9/11 and especially with the US invasion of Iraq whereby Iran leverage was enhanced dramatically. Consequently, US, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran became active players to balance the power of region. This study will analyze the genesis of Israel and that what are the US policy contours in Middle East and how far the US has succeeded in achieving these goals? How the geopolitical dynamics are working in the region with convergence and divergence of interests?*

*The confused policies on the part of the US should take new turn in order to restore peace and real democratic set up.*

**Key Words:** *Middle East, Security, Geopolitics, Policy contours, Nuclear Deal, Peace, Persian Gulf, Balance of Power.*

### ***Introduction***

Being the birthplace of three principal religions of the world, the Middle East is sacrosanct to the Muslims, Christians and Jews alike. The region is the Cradle of Civilizations and a cornerstone of boisterous events in world history. In early 1900s, American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan acknowledged not only the strategic importance of the region, but also of its focal point, the Persian Gulf. He termed the area surrounding Persian Gulf as *the Middle East*, and called it the most important passage for Britain to control after Suez Canal<sup>1</sup>.

Historically, the region has remained turbulent with political, economic, religious and sectarian dimensions. With no visible signs of emerging stability, multiple conflicts continue to plague the region - having extra regional implications.<sup>2</sup> The Middle East is home to half of the world's proven oil reserves, the hub of energy shipping lanes and simultaneously the center of intense sectarian conflict. The strategic enormity of the region can be gauged from the fact that US military presence has declined since the end of the Cold War in every part of the world except the Middle East. The region is home to sectarian as well as Arab and non-Arab divides. Before 1970s, the region was characterized by Arab Nationalism versus Secularism. However, Arab nationalism suffered serious reverses in 1970s when the Arab states were defeated by Israel. Following the Iranian Revolution, the rise of reformers took place in the form of Imam Khomeini and Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen. In 1980s, Islamic Nationalism came to fore and the Middle East continued to remain a "gun powder magazine" requiring only a match. The stability of Middle East has remained in question since 1980s Iran-Iraq War. It did not take much time to turn the tables against Iraq which was shattered by the Gulf Wars, resulting in heightening of sectarianism.

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The recent years saw rise of non-state actors in the form of Al-Qaeda fighting against the entire organized world in a coalition. The region also experienced political unrest beginning in Tunisia at the end of 2010, which later swept across the entire Arab world. The unrest forced the Tunisian president to flee abroad, the Egyptian President to resign, overthrowing of Gaddafi regime with the West's military intervention, use of Saudi Arabia and the UAE troops to calm down Bahrain, power struggle in Yemen and Western backed efforts to oust Bashar Al Assad. Rise and expansion of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in recent months has given a new dimension to the myriad of Middle Eastern challenges<sup>3</sup>.

The Arab spring happened in 2010 for the sake to impart permeability to the Arab state system which was one of its feature decades ago. This led to new geopolitical dynamics being initiated before the US invasion and Iraq's occupation which touched new horizons. The Arab intra fights became bloodier and offensive. The horn of dilemma is that the NATO was given responsibilities by the Arab League and powered them to end Arab regimes and overwhelm their internal set up.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo are focusing on sectarian strife, complicated transition, separatist and civil wars.

#### ***Middle East Geo-Politics and Balance of Power***

In Middle East since the Ottoman Empire's fall, the Arab state system has absorbing quality. In the first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century the power tussle started between Riyadh, Cairo and Baghdad whereby the Camp David Accord led to contest which became localized. Syria grappled hegemony over Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine Liberation Organization. On the other hand Saudi Arabia towered over Gulf counterparts<sup>5</sup>. There was war between Iraq and Iran in North Africa two actors Morocco and Algeria were at tug of war over Western Sahara Conflict.

The scenario got transformed with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 which revitalized the traditional geopolitical centers of inter-Arab Politics. The situation took new turn with 9/11 terrorist attacks and especially the Iraq invasion by the US in 2003 which had transformed inter-Arab alignment and geo-politics of the region. In all this situation Washington stood supreme after fall of Baghdad whereby the US put forwarded aggressive campaign against its rivals.

Meanwhile, the US neo-Con policy of occupation and then democratization turned neighboring countries against the US. (They contemplated that it would lead to fulfill the US post 9/11 regional reform agenda) opening their borders to Salafi-Jihadi fighters en-route Iraq<sup>6</sup>.

Washington growing troubles in Iraq resulted in Iran increasing leverage in the regional geo-strategic dynamics. Previously the Arab leaders were engrossed in petty battles in their summits and in Arab League which got transformed to grand geo-political confrontations as intricate configuration came to forefront in form of Saudi Arabia contest over regional dominance played mainly in Iraq, Lebanon and the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Yemen and Bahrain, Iran was apprehensive to Riyadh and the latter contemplated Hamas and Hezbollah as proxy instruments for Tehran in Arab world. Hence the region was divided on the basis of geo-political confrontations into. There are pro-US states formation known as 'Moderate' against the Radical states with anti-US stance who are with motive to counter Iran's strategic trends and enhance its leverage beyond Iraqi theatres. Riyadh is working as a balancer by the US for curbing Tehran.

**Role of Israel**

Basically Palestine (Old name Canaan) was inhabited by Abraham, Moses and Jews.

Jews quoted Old and New Testament for their standpoint that Palestine was promised to them by Allah. They quote GENESIS CHAPTER 17, VERSE 8 whereby Allah promised them as such:

*"I will give to you, and to your seed after you, the land where you are traveling, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession. I will be their God."*

But Palestine argue that in same bible GENESIS CHAPTER 29 it is stated that Ibraheem purchased land there for his grave. Hence if he was owner then why he would purchase land for his grave?

The prophecy of land ownership was not fulfilled so it is not workable.

Then Jews put forward the logic that:

*"SARA who gave birth to Ishaq (Jews from him) was legal wife of Ibraheem (A.S) while Hajra who gave birth to Ismail (A.S) was not legal wife (concubine)"*

But in Bible it is stated that Both Sara and Hajra were legal wives and Kaitoora who was concubine (whose children have no right to inheritance). This is the main tussle since the inception of Israel state 1948. The Israel contemplates themselves as sole owner of the land by quoting Bible for their sake.

**The United States Policy Contours in Middle East**

U.S.policy contours in the broader Middle East are generally understood to include

*"The US wants to curb interstate conflicts that can threaten allies (including Israel) and put their interests in doldrums. Moreover, the US needs persistence flow of energy resources and commerce that is indispensable to the U.S regional, and global economies, insurance of transit and access to facilities to support U.S. military operations, curbing terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation of weapons and above all to flourish economic growth, democracy, and human rights in this war contested region<sup>7</sup>."*

**America's Principal Interests in the Region**

There are five principle interests of America in the region: ensure uninterrupted flow of oil towards west, Disruption / Denial of oil flow towards East, Roll back Russian / Chinese influence in the region, defeat of Islamists groups and maintain balance of power in the region. Any attempt to achieve one of the objectives might jeopardize progress in the others. Therefore U.S. must move very cautiously and take along all the major players of the region in order to successfully achieve its objectives.

However there are complications in the way of US policy fulfillment as for preservation of regional stability and to protect US security through counterterrorism and counter proliferation demands cooperation with leaders who are stubborn to the very concept of democratization and human rights<sup>8</sup>.

There is intricate configuration as difficult relations of allies with each other for instance as Israel and Saudi Arabia with Iran.

In Middle East after Arab spring public opinion is powerful now as many have contemplated that some of their leaders are subservient to the US for assistance, arms and trade benefits hence US should be cautious regarding Arab-Israel peace process because people are vigilant about their rights. In all this play greater public say led to electoral support for Islamist parties, as the cause of the US struggle against radical forces as Al-Qaeda, Hamas and Hezbollah, government of Iran and Syria has been dwindled. As regimes that worked with the US against Iran have under internal decay.

Furthermore, the economic constraints have affected the US to the extent to reconsider military intervention and expanded program of aid because she cannot continue the same on long run.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Geo-Politics of the Middle East***

In Middle East the geopolitical dynamics are active while contemplating the situation whereby different actors are involved for own national interests. Following is illustration of this statement.

### ***West Bank and Gaza Strip***

The Geo-Political contest in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been active whereby the Palestine Authority (PA) is led by Mahmoud Abbas while on the other hand Hamas and Islamic Jihad are striving for their rights. Washington and Riyadh bestowed financial political and military support on Abbas PA to balance Tehran leverage. Washington has connected its support for Hamas with condition of Hamas recognition of Israel. Washington determined to dent Hamas the privilege of assuming power in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip<sup>10</sup>.

### ***Israel-Palestine Conflict***

Both Iran and Saudi Arabia consider themselves as patrons of Palestinian nationhood. However, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is another example of Iran and Saudi Arabia backing rival local factions with competing interests. Since 79, Iran has identified itself with total rejection of Israeli existence. While Saudi Arabia generally supports a two-state solution offering full recognition in exchange for a withdrawal to pre-67 borders

### ***Syria***

The Syrian turmoil is potential enough to keep the US national interests at stake as preserving regional peace, ending state sponsored terrorism, limiting the spread of WMD and support of human rights<sup>11</sup>. Syria was focal point for the Saudi Arabia's fulfillment of her objectives against Iran enhanced leverage. Syria is apprehensive for both Washington and Riyadh viewed Damascus as the link between Tehran to Hezbollah and Hamas. Project political power of Iran in the region and its material capabilities along Israeli border.

Basically Iran alliance with Syria provided Tehran political cover for its growing influence and interference in Arab affairs. Damascus accused Riyadh of interfering in its own security arena and domestic politics by financing Salafi groups and Jihadi cells in Lebanon and Syria.

Rise of IS and Political crisis in Syria has worsened into a humanitarian crisis of great proportions. For Iran and Saudi Arabia it has become epicenter of sectarian cum geopolitical bloodbath. Radical elements of ISIS are flourishing and President Assad is still resilient. Given these circumstances U.S. faces great dilemma of resolving the crisis without having to intervene militarily. It is very clear to the U.S. that there can be no military solution to civil war in Syria and U.S. should attempt to develop a political strategy with short term humanitarian objectives leading to long term solution of maintaining unitary status of Syria. U.S. is also aware that the participation of Iran will be the most crucial factor that would ensure the success of the process. The U.S. should also consider participation of President Assad as he has begun to direct his military might against ISIS.

Syria - the Epicenter of Geo-political and Sectarian Bloodbath. For past few years, Syria has become the major battleground for regional as well as international

players. The US, already war weary, remained reluctant to intervene directly in Syria. Initially, the US showed intention to remove Assad regime, however, "growing concerns about radical elements of Syrian rebel forces, coupled with the Assad regime's resilience, backed by Russia and China, seemingly downgraded US priorities to merely the removal of chemical weapons."

#### ***Iranian Position***

Iran, strategically isolated since the 1979 revolution, had Syria as its only consistent ally since then. The partnership between the two countries was fueled by shared hatred of the US and Israel. Syria provides Iran "a critical geographic thoroughfare to arm and finance the Lebanese Shia militia Hezbollah" and conversely Iran is strongly motivated to keep the Assad regime in power. With 64 % Sunni population ruled by 18 % Shia Alawites, Iran fears that if Assad falls, a Sunni regime aligned with Saudi Arabia could come to power in Syria.

#### ***Saudi Position***

Saudi Arabia is outraged by the large-scale killing of Sunnis by Alawite dictatorship. Saudi Arabia regards Syria as the:

"Ground zero in its struggle with Iran, a make-or-break opportunity to seriously clip Tehran's wings in the Middle East and restore the status quo in Saudia's favour."

Saudi support to the Syrian opposition escalated in early 2012 with the intervention of Hezbollah and Revolutionary Guards.

#### ***Russian Interests***

Syria also enjoys the status of being a strong Russian ally in the region. Russia has consistently supplied Syrian military with a full range of weapons. Russia has also made significant energy investments in Syria. An agreement between the two countries in 2013 to explore offshore gas in Levant Basin allows Syria to become the latest regional actor to ride the Eastern Mediterranean energy rush<sup>12</sup>.

#### ***Chinese Interests***

Since 2011, China has vetoed three UN Security Council resolutions condemning Assad regime<sup>13</sup>. US support in dislodging Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and its decision not to act against the Syrian regime and US rapprochement towards Iran has damaged erstwhile warm relations, bringing Saudi Arabia and China closer<sup>14</sup>.

#### ***Geopolitics of Gas and Syrian Crisis***

It is not difficult to notice that the rebellion in Syria began to grow two and a half years ago, almost the same time as the signing of a memorandum in Bushehr on June 25, 2011 regarding the construction of a new Iran-Iraq-Syria gas pipeline (also called as Islamic pipeline).

Qatar proposed to build the pipeline to Europe involving Turkey and Israel, bypassing Iraq and branching at Homs in Syria to three directions. Turkey is also opposed to the project as it does not fall in the transportation route of Islamic pipeline.

#### ***Egypt***

Since 1970s Egypt's government has been strategic partner of the US. The US brokered 1979 Israeli Egyptian camp David peace treaty. Most significant in Egypt is the Suez Canal as world's key waterways. The US seeks access to it to project its power in Mediterranean Sea, Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf for protecting global oil and cargo shipments that pass through canal<sup>15</sup>.

Furthermore the US needs Egypt for security purposes due to country long experienaaace in combating extremist groups in order to combat terrorism. But the Egyptian support for Palestinian cause has ability t rupture Israeli-Egyptianrelations which is nightmarish for the US. However the US policy towards Egypt may become focused on containment of potential conflict zones such as Gaza and Sinai Peninsula.

### **Iran**

In the context of major issues lying at the heart of the Middle East, the US, Saudi Arabia and Iran emerge as important regional and international players defining the evolution of the region. This tangential troika essentially defines the scale of events while remaining countries find themselves in a vicious bind. Saudi Arabia and Iran are two regional heavy weights having extreme differences and ironically have least convergence of interests even on the core issue of Religion. The proxy battlegrounds of the two countries can be seen from by the *Stratfor* depiction as shown on slide. In this equation, USA is the major international power that tries to achieve its objectives in the region through partnerships and animosities with Saudi Arabia and Iran as per the dictates of her national interests. In this backdrop, the established political order of the Middle East is likely to change in near future due to changed US priorities with respect to Iran and Saudi Arabia.

### ***The Changing Political Order - Nuclear Deal, Domestic Energy and Asia Pivot***

The prospect of a possible US - Iran nuclear rapprochement is likely to alter status quo in the region. The interim nuclear deal, US - Saudi regional disagreements, the US discovery and large scale production of shale gas and *Asia Pivot* policy have prompted discussions regarding realignment of alliances in the region. Iran is a likely contender to replace Saudi Arabia as the major regional ally of convenience for the US.

### ***US Rapprochement towards Iran: Putting the Relationship in Proper Perspective.***

Some of the possible causes of recent rapprochement can be; US strategic exhaustion, Growing Chinese influence in Asia Pacific Region, Convergence of US and Iran's interest in Iraq and Syria., China's alignment with Russia, Countering ISIS, Economic Interests of both states.

### ***Contours of Interim Deal***

P5+1 members reached an interim deal with Iran in Geneva in November 2013, opening up the likelihood of transformed power play in the Middle East. The contours of the interim deal are; Roll back key aspects of Iran's nuclear program including near-20% enriched uranium, Increased inspection of Iranian nuclear facilities, In exchange of above, temporarily lifting of some of the sanctions on Iran, The agreement seeks to freeze Iran's nuclear progress while Iran and the P5+1 negotiate a final nuclear agreement within a limited time frame.

### ***Final Deal***

The deliberations for reaching a final deal are still underway and likely contours of final deal are still unclear. However, it is expected that compromises will be made by both sides. Iran may continue to enrich uranium within certain limits. The Arak heavy water reactor will be turned into a light water reactor according to IAEA safeguards. Iran will be asked to ratify the NPT Additional Protocol, permitting IAEA access to non-declared sites with little notification. The phasing out of sanctions by US, EU and UN Security Council will be linked to implementation of the agreement. The future road map of nuclear deliberations as per *Stratfor report* of 2015 is as shown.

***What Iran Gains from the Deal?***

Iran appears to be the ultimate beneficiary of the rapprochement. Iran is likely to secure much needed boost to its economy by gaining access to billions of shah's frozen assets in foreign banks. Iran also stands to gain through oil exports, potential foreign direct investment and trade as several EU countries appear poised to return to Iranian markets. Ban on Iranian banks is likely to be lifted which will contribute towards decrease in unemployment rate and inflation. Value of Iranian currency is likely to soar. The U.S. also has potential to pave way for Iran to become a WTO member. Apart from economic benefits, Iran will have opportunity to shrug off its pariah status. The status quo in the region might pave way for a "nuclear Iran" along with gains in the field of its ballistic missile program

***Military Benefits***

Iran also stands to benefit militarily from the deal. It has developed a significant knowledge base of nuclear science which cannot be destroyed by any amount of military action, in case the deal fails. Moreover, Iran considers presence of US Navy Fifth Fleet in Bahrain as an outpost to monitor Iran. In case of deal and shift of US focus from the region to Asia Pacific, US presence is likely to thin out and Iran is expected to emerge as a potent military force in the Gulf, rivaled only by Israel<sup>16</sup>. This will also ensure a greater security role for Iran in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon. Lifting of sanctions will also facilitate purchase of military hardware from across the world.

***Iraq***

Iran had consistently resented US and Saudi support for Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war. With a Shia government installed in Iraq and uncertain future of Syria, Iraq's importance as an ally to Iran has consistently grown. From Saudi Arabia's point of view:

*" If US sin of omission in Syria has been to Iran's benefit, US sin of commission in Iraq - the 2003 removal of then Iraqi President Saddam Hussein - was an enormous gift to Tehran."*

While the US fought in Iraq to dislodge Saddam Hussain, it was an overt supporter of Saddam Hussain in the 80s. However, following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the US expedient ally had, overnight, become one of its most bitter enemies.

***Bahrain***

In Bahrain as in Syria, a demographic minority rules over a majority. While the Sunni ruling Al-Khalifa family is closely aligned with Saudi Arabia, Iran has attempted to portray itself as supporter of the subjugated Shia majority.

Since Bahrain serves as the headquarters of the US Naval fifth fleet, Iran considers it as a US garrison in the Middle East to keep a check on Iran's influence in the Gulf.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia wants Iran to declare that unrest in Bahrain is Bahrain's internal matter and withdraw all moral and material support to the Shia dissidents.

***Crisis in Yemen***

The discussions are ripe about Yemen becoming the next Iraq or Syria as a deepening proxy war threatens to tear the country apart. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran have proven eager to arm groups loyal to them. The US also has played its role in turning Houthis from a religious revivalist movement to a powerful militia by supplying authoritarian regime of President Ali Abdullah Saleh with weapons and training. The conflict is already intensifying since the Houthis seized control of Yemen's capital Sanaa in September '14 with the help of its Northern tribes and Iran.

The Saudis had failed to defeat Houthis in a series of 2009 skirmishes and see them as a dangerous Iranian proxy.

### ***Recent Developments***

Because of Iran's presence in Iraq and Syria, Houthis success in Yemen including control of Yemeni port, Al Hodieda, along The Red Sea and their drive towards Aden to control Bab ul Madeb prompted Saudi air strikes against Houthi strongholds, named as 'Operation Decisive Storm'. Saudi Arabia has gone for extreme action due to the feeling that it is being surrounded by Iran from all sides including control of shipping lanes.

GCC states and five other Muslim countries including Pakistan have shown allegiance to Saudi Arabia. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif stated in the National Assembly on 27 March that, "if the sovereignty or territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia is threatened then Pakistan will defend it" and "We want this issue to be resolved in a common forum where the Muslim world or Arab League is involved. The need of the hour is alliance and solidarity, not division."

### ***Way Forward***

The analysis of present landscape reveals that unilateralism is not the recipe for peace in the fragile Middle East as the region cannot any new adventurism. A brief overview of strengths and vulnerabilities of important Middle Eastern countries is given below, in order to identify measures which can prevent further instability in the region.

### ***Strengths and Vulnerabilities of Middle Eastern Countries***

#### ***Iran***

Its strengths include a strong sense of nationhood and trust in leadership, consistent democratic dispensation since the revolution, rich energy resources and strong armed forces. Its vulnerabilities include its sectarian stakes in the Arab World, vulnerability to attack by Israel because of nuclear aspirations, presence of non-state actors on its soil (Jundullah in Seistan-o-Balochistan), its economic strangulation because of sanctions and internal implosion due to non-acceptance of authoritarian regime by the reformers in the society.

#### ***Iraq***

Its strengths include its oil reserves, central location in the Arabian Peninsula and increasing interactions with China and Russia. Its vulnerabilities include ethnic and sectarian division of society, internal security situation and a disjointed and weak military.

#### ***Syria***

Its strengths include its location at the junction of three continents, loyal and better trained military and close interaction with Russia and China. The vulnerabilities include its sectarian fault lines, resentment due to a minority ruling the majority and proneness to proxy warfare.

#### ***Saudi Arabia***

Its strengths include its status of energy giant, strong government control over the population and its religious centrality being home to the two Holy Mosques. The vulnerabilities include insecure borders, oil rivalry within the region, human rights issues and monarchical consistency with possible internal dissension over the Kingship succession.

#### ***Israel***

Its strengths include strong armed forces, efficient defense industry and a strong Jewish lobby. The vulnerabilities include its being prone to revenge attacks by Palestinians, possible Iranian retaliation and increasing differences with Europe and the United States.



**Recommendations**

In order to prevent the region from slipping into further chaos, following recommendations are proffered:

***With Respect to Syria***

The United States should stop supporting rebels and work out a political process to work with President Assad's government and with greater scrutiny by the UN and international community. This transparency is necessary to renew legitimacy of US actions in Syria, which has already been torn apart. Syria should accommodate Saudi concerns by adopting a broad based Sunni representation in her political system. Iran should act as mediator between the United States and Syria, in order to reach to a political settlement in order to stabilize the region.

***With Respect to Iraq***

To counter ISIS threat, Iraqi government should be provided US intelligence, air power and other enablers.

To curb theories revolving around themes that ISIS is being supported by some factions of the US, President Obama should make proceedings of his war with ISIS transparent

Iraq should strive to maintain her territorial integrity and prevent any division. This may be done by putting a sincere effort by Haider al-Abadi government to address sectarian fault lines.

In addition to training Iraqi troops in line with already signed defense pact, Iran should use its influence to ensure that Abadi Government does not repeat mistakes committed by his predecessor which significantly contributed to the rise of ISIS.

***With Respect to Palestine***

United States should ask Israel to stop the illegal settlements in West Bank and Gaza. At the same time, Isreal should be asked to distance itself officilly from the Yinon Plan of Greater Israel.

All Palestinian organizations should stop fighting with each other for petty influence and should unify against the common foe of Israel.

Instead of resorting to armed struggle only, Iran should use its influence on Hamas to fight the Palestinian liberation case politically as well.

***With Respect to Saudi Arabia / GCC States***

As a measure of appeasement, the United States should guarantee Saudi Arabia that any nuclear deal with Iran will not be tantamount to abandoning its Gulf partners.

Considering the ill fate of Hosni Mubarak's dictatorship as benchmark, the monarchs of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait must introduce greater moderation and reforms in dealing with beleagured population.

The United States should play its role to reduce antipathy between Iran and KSA as this, in the long run, will benefit US economic interests in the region. The oil rich GCC should adopt a 'give and take' policy to find a strong leverage against Israel and other common adversaries. Oil reserves can provide such leverage during days of oil crisis.

Iran should assure GCC states that any military capability attained by Iran will not be used against them.

***With Respect to Yemen***

Saudi Arabia should exercise restraint as military action is not the solution of Yemen problem.

United States should exercise influence through UN Security Council over Yemen to introduce a power sharing formula between President Hadi and Abdul Malik al-Houthi.

United States should influence Iran to paly its part in resolving Yemeni crisis as a pre-condition to finalization of nuclear deal.

Moreover, Iran should distance itself from supporting Houthis and support a power sharing formula addressing Saudi concerns.

Pakistan's role should be more of a mediator than a participant for conflict resolution.

In case Govt of Pakistan decides to send troops to support Saudi Arabia, the role of Army should only be restricted to protecting the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia.

### **Conclusion**

The United States has long followed confusing and often conflicting policies in the region including its engagements with Iran. It remains to be seen whether the nuclear deal can lead to better US-Iran relations and a positive impact on the region. It also remains to be seen what measures the United States, Saudi Arabia and Iran undertake to reduce instability quotient in the region, particularly in view of the recent crisis in Yemen. While a stable and terrorism free Middle East best serves the interests of all the stakeholders, the complexity of events that characterizes the region is immense. Given that all recommendations are followed, the Middle East will become a blissful heaven which, however, is not likely to happen.

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