The UAE Takes over the Middle East Peace Process

The United Arab Emirates is a unique country. Within just a few decades, it has turned from a poor region living off meager commercial pearling to becoming one of the leaders of the international negotiation process — a financially independent, stable, and authoritative state. Today, the UAE is a major producer of hydrocarbons, holding one of the leading places in the world ranking oil-exporting countries, and actively participates in the international negotiation process to achieve sustainable and just peace in the Middle East.

As a federation of seven constituent monarchies, the UAE follows the ideology of strict Sunni Islam. Since 1981, Abu Dhabi has been a member and one of the founders of the GCC (Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf) — the main regional organization of the countries of the Arabian Peninsula. It has close partnerships with Saudi Arabia in the Syrian, Libyan, and other the Middle East in dealing with crises. The close relationship between the UAE and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) can be evidenced by Abu Dhabi's support of Riyadh's military intervention in Yemen in 2015 to support the president of Yemen Abd Rabbo Mansur Hadi, and taking the side of KSA in 2016-2017 in Qatar-Iran conflict. The alliance between the UAE and the KSA is largely due to the close personal relationship of their Crown Princes: Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the heir to the throne and the de facto ruler of the UAE, is considered a "godfather" and "mentor" Mohammed bin Salman, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, who helped the latter come to power in the KSA and exerted a strong influence on him. Both rulers are the main supporters of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, President of Egypt, and the Libyan Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, having similar views on the need to fight the Muslim Brotherhood (banned in the Russian Federation - ed.).

The UAE's foreign policy is based on diplomacy and negotiation down pledged by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founding father and the Union's first President, including the need to comply with the principle of non-interference in the sovereign affairs of other states, and the obligations to neighboring countries and the international community they committed themselves to maintain peace, stability, and security for all in the region. To this end, Abu Dhabi purposefully contributes to a supporting partnership and dialogue between countries, which allows the UAE to conduct an effective, balanced policy and maintain broad ties with the international community. These features of the UAE's foreign policy explain Abu Dhabi's desire to develop closer ties with its neighbors on the Arabian Peninsula through the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), to conduct an active dialogue with world and regional leaders, in the light of developments in Palestine, Israel, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. While advocating an equitable and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East, the UAE believes that peace cannot be achieved under the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories, supporting the end of the Israeli occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the framework of an agreement based on the Arab peace initiative.

The Middle East peace settlement problem and the brutal ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict have kept many countries in suspense for decades and have given unprecedented urgency to international relations. Therefore, the agreement on the full normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates reached recently following a telephone conversation between US President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Crown Prince of the United Arab Emirates (the de facto ruler of the country), Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, attracted special attention from the international community.

Thus, as a result of the diplomatic steps taken by Abu Dhabi, Israel agreed for the first time in a quarter of a century to fully normalize relations with an Arab country — the UAE. The price of the upcoming signing of the package of documents was the decision of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to postpone the earlier declared
Declaration of Israel's sovereignty over the West Bank: Israel will not declare sovereignty over the entire West Bank, and Muslims will be able to freely visit the Holy sites of Jerusalem. The parties also agreed to continue the settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with other countries of the Persian Gulf. As Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed told the media, as part of the agreements reached, Israel refused to Annex the Palestinian territories. Delegations from Israel and the United Arab Emirates are expected to meet soon to sign bilateral agreements on investment, tourism, direct flights, security, telecommunications, and other issues. An exchange of Ambassadors and Embassies between Israel and the UAE is also expected.

At the same time, the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash stressed that the Emirati Embassy will not be opened in Jerusalem until the Israelis sign peace agreements with the Palestinians. At the same time, he particularly drew attention to the fact that by making peace with Israel, the UAE "dismantled the time bomb that threatened the two-state solution."

Thus, the UAE becomes the first state of the Gulf to have diplomatic relations with Israel, and the third Arab state: Egypt concluded a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, followed by Jordan in 1994. Mauritania recognized Israel in 1999 but ended relations in 2009 due to the war in the Gaza strip.

As for the reaction of the Israelis and Arabs to the agreement, it is ambiguous. Israeli settlers living in the West Bank speak of a betrayal of their interests.

President of Egypt Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi has already commented on the announcement of the normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, saying that this is a step towards stabilizing the region and its prosperity.

President of Palestine Mahmoud Abbas officially condemned the tripartite agreement between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States and called for an emergency meeting of the League of the Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to reject the agreement.

According to Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, current Special Aide to the President of the Islamic Parliament (Ali Larijani) of Iran in International Affairs, this step is considered a strategic mistake in the Islamic Republic.

Taking into account the US mediation in reaching this agreement, Donald Trump might, without any doubt, record this as an asset in the course of the recently escalated presidential election struggle in the United States. Considering that peace between Israel and the Palestinians has remained almost the only unfulfilled campaign promise given by Donald Trump, on the background of active promotion of the image of the Democratic nominee for Vice-President Kamala Harris as the supporters of the US-Israeli partnership. Trump, of course, can now demonstrate that he is the greatest friend for Israel in Washington.

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