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Behraves, Maysam

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PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

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Obama's Camp David and Its Discontents

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Maysam Behraves, Doctoral Student of Political Science

Lund University, Sweden

As was predicted from the very beginning, the recent meeting between the US President Barack Obama and heads of state from the Middle East Arab countries in Camp David, Washington, ended on May 15 with participants putting emphasis on the need to face Iran "threat" and Tehran's efforts to "destabilize the region." However, the final result, despite what Arab allies of Washington expected, was not very tangible and satisfactory for them. In other words, the Camp David summit did not meet the expectations of Arab states for the conclusion of an official security treaty with the United States.



Perhaps, it was due to awareness of Washington's unwillingness to sign this treaty that the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates did not take part in the meeting. In addition to refraining from signing a mutual security treaty – similar to what Washington has already signed with Japan – with the Persian Gulf Arab states, Obama administration also avoided calling Arab participants of the Camp David as major non-NATO allies of Washington. It should be noted that Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait are already major non-NATO allies of the United States.

Washington was not even ready to bring its Arab partners in the Middle East under its defensive or nuclear umbrella, though it has already reached such an agreement with South Korea. In addition to such important factors as changing strategic priorities of the United States followed by the need for Washington to shift its focus from the Middle East to other regions, especially, Asia-Pacific, Eurasia, and the Arctic; another major reason for Washington's unwillingness to sign such a treaty with the Persian Gulf Arab states is the presence of Israel in the Middle East region and the need to maintain its military superiority over regional Arab countries. Obama administration does not want to challenge military and arms superiority of Israel by bolstering military power of Arab countries or assigning a specific security and defense status to them. Such a move would have been naturally met with opposition from the US Congress and could have increased tensions between Congress and the White House.

An outcome of this way of thinking is the United States' opposition to sales of F-35 fighter jets – which are manufactured by Lockheed Martin Company and are among the most advanced fighter jets operated by the US Air Force with extraordinary stealth capabilities – to Arab countries in the Middle East. Interestingly enough, Washington has already given the go-ahead to sales of F-35 jets to Israel and the warplanes are scheduled to be delivered to Tel Aviv in the near future. One of the main advantages of F-35 fighter jets is that it is undetectable to air defense systems like Russia's S-300 missile system. Perhaps, the only noteworthy result of Camp David summit was the announcement of the US commitment to help Arab countries of the Persian Gulf build a joint defense shield in the region in order to avert possible missile attacks by Iran.

It should be noted that putting such a project into practice would not be devoid of challenges. As put by Anthony H. Cordesman, a defense analyst at US Congress and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the greatest challenge facing this project is to work out a comprehensive agreement among the member states of the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council [(P)GCC] over necessary rules and preparations for averting missile threats. In view of the differences that exist among Arab countries with regard to certain security matters in the region, achieving such an agreement does not seem to be an easy task. Of course, Washington agreed in December 2014 to allow sales of defensive weapons and equipment by American companies to the member

states of the (P)GCC as an "organization – similar to arms sales to the NATO – and this will pave the way for the establishment of a joint defense system by these countries. However, a more important challenge in this regard pertains to Israel. If Israel's military superiority in the Middle East is going to be maintained, such a joint defense system should be designed and deployed in such a way that while blocking missile attacks from Iran, it would not be able to block possible missile and aerial attacks carried out by Israel!

A review of the past developments will show that [a controversial address to the US Congress](#) by [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in March 2015](#), who actually tried to reduce a national issue to a personal grudge against Barack Obama, finally ended in favor of nuclear agreement with Iran. Now, this is the second time that during the past few months, the position and status of Israel, as a key ally of the United States in the Middle East, has unintentionally and ironically benefited Iran. While Israel took exemplar advantage of Iran's behavior in past years to promote its own strategic goals, now the table has turned in favor of Iran, mostly because of the righteous and wise foreign policy adopted by the new Iranian administration. As a result of this policy, the United States has gone as far as offending and even alienating its age-old allies in the region.

Key Words: US President Barack Obama, Middle East, Arab Countries, Camp David, NATO, Official Security Treaty, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Bahrain, Kuwait, US Congress, (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council, Benjamin Netanyahu, Behraves

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