

Reshaping the Geopolitics of the Middle East: An Analysis of the Abraham Accords

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ABSTRACT: The Abraham Accords, signed in September 2020, marked the first major normalization of relations between Israel and four Arab states, namely the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco more than twenty-five years ago. This research aims at studying the effects of these agreements on geopolitics in the Middle East region over the first five years since their signing, 2020-2025, against the backdrop of the long-lasting war in Gaza and the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. Such aspects as the effect on trade and investment, security cooperation in order to prevent any Iranian interference, the effect of the Gaza war on the support of states and the population, and the possibility of extension of the accords to Saudi Arabia and post-Assad Syria are examined. Qualitative research method is used in accordance with the comparative and thematic analysis of official documents, trade statistics, defense agreements, public opinion polls, and policy reports. The results indicate remarkable success at the governmental level: trade UAE-Israel has amounted to \$3.2 billion in 2024, Morocco has bought significant amounts of arms from Israel. Nevertheless, there was a massive decline in popular support, and the approval rate for Morocco fell from thirty-one percent in 2021 to thirteen percent in 2024. In sum, the study shows that while there has been an actual construction of economic and security interdependence among states, for true change to take place at the regional level, more states need to be involved, and more needs to be done about the Palestinian question to close the widening gap between pragmatism and popular sentiment.

KEYWORDS: Abraham Accords, Economic Interdependence, Israel-UAE Normalization, Middle East Geopolitics

Introduction

The Arab-Israeli conflict has been one of the longest-standing and defining elements of the geopolitics of the Middle East for well over a century now. This prolonged contestation, revolving around conflicting histories, national narratives, claims to ownership of land, and perceptions of victimhood, has determined loyalties and rivalries alike as well as numerous attempts at peacemaking that have come to nothing thus far. Thanks to both internal political circumstances, the particularities of the regional environment, and the continued intervention of the international community, the Arab-Israeli conflict was able to persist for a long time, becoming an important element of Arab

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political consciousness and diplomacy (Guzansky & Marshall, 2020). Hence, the Arab-Israeli dispute came to define the formation of the regional alliances, with the Palestinian national cause becoming the key symbol of Arab unity against Western imperialism.

For a very long time, the Palestinian national cause played the key role in regional diplomacy, allowing for the creation of a unifying narrative for Arab states and providing the notion that normalization with Israel was possible only after solving the Palestinian problem. (Miller, 2021). This position was officially endorsed by the 1967 Khartoum Resolution's "Three No's," namely, no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with Israel, which was further buttressed by the use of tools such as the Arab League boycott against Israel, which kept it economically and diplomatically isolated from its neighbors (Feiler, 1998). The importance of the Palestinian issue was such that an Arab leader seeking reconciliation with Israel without substantial developments regarding the Palestinians would face domestic turmoil and international isolation, thereby forming a veto point for Arab-Israeli normalization (Shamir & Shikaki, 2005).

The peace agreements concluded between Israel and Egypt in 1979 and between Israel and Jordan in 1994 were important diplomatic milestones that did not lead to regional normalization. The agreement signed between Israel and Egypt, mediated by the United States at Camp David, provided for a land-for-peace formula, under which the Sinai Peninsula was transferred back to Egyptian sovereignty in exchange for diplomatic and security arrangements (Quandt, 2005). However, Egypt's separate peace faced strong criticism from the Arab League, causing the expulsion of Egypt from the body and the severing of diplomatic ties with most of the Arab nations. Likewise, while the Jordan-Israel agreement of 1994 did not receive as much opposition due to Jordan's relatively minor importance strategically, it did not help the situation either, failing to bring about any greater acceptance of Israel among the Arabs and making no fundamental changes to the nature of the conflict (Susser, 2012).

The Abraham Accords, signed on September 15, 2020, in the White House in Washington, D.C., marked a turning point in the diplomacy of the Middle East region and completely changed the existing patterns of Arab-Israeli relations. The agreement that was initiated by the Trump administration gathered the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain as the first parties of the accords, quickly followed by Sudan and Morocco, thus making a breakthrough in the normalization of relations between the Arab states and Israel after more than a quarter of a century (U.S. Department of State, 2020). The participation of a non-Arab state that had a Muslim majority in the accords, namely Kosovo, added another layer to the divergence of the accords from the traditional framework of Arab consensus. The totality of the accords was the most extensive Arab-Israeli diplomatic move since 1994, when Jordan signed the treaty, and 1979, when Egypt signed its peace deal (Guzansky & Podeh, 2025).

In essence, the Abraham Accords marked a complete deviation from the previous peace frameworks as they included a so-called "interests-for-peace" or "peace-for-peace" model instead of the usual "land-for-peace" formula which was used in previous treaties such as Egypt's peace agreement and Jordan's one (Rynhold & Yaari, 2020). Contrary to the previous agreements where both Egypt and Jordan managed to get back their territories, namely the Sinai Peninsula and some lands under Israeli occupation, the Abraham Accords did not include any territorial concessions from Israel (Guzansky & Marshall, 2020). In other words, the accords were created on the basis of mutual interests of all sides in the issues of economy and security of the countries, which meant the fear of Iran's influence, the need for economic reforms, and a strategic partnership with America.

The accords were named after Abraham due to him being the common father figure of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, thus highlighting the possibility of interfaith harmony and common heritage between the people of the region. The use of Abrahamic terminology in referring to the accords is purposefully meant to highlight peaceful

coexistence of religions and not political strife (Singer, 2021). Using the idea of Abrahamic accords as a symbolic representation was meant to appeal to the different religious communities within the countries signing these agreements by emphasizing shared beliefs and destinies regardless of the bitter history. The focus on religious unity was used as an additional element to complement the practical reasons for normalizing relations (Guzansky & Feuer, 2021).

Historical Context

The pre-Abraham Accords Middle East region had long been experiencing the effect of Arab League-imposed isolation of Israel that served as a great hindrance to regional cooperation and integration. Indeed, one of the most effective and comprehensive systems of sanctions against Israel is the Arab League Boycott of Israel (ALBI) set up almost immediately after Israel became a state in 1948 and officially introduced by the Unified Boycott Rules in 1951 (Feiler, 1998). The sanction system was coordinated and managed by the Central Boycott Office (CBO) located in Damascus; the CBO maintained an annual blacklist of foreign enterprises doing business with Israel and controlled their compliance with ALBI through the Economic Council of the Arab League (Lenczowski, 1980). Thus, by 1975, there were already more than 1,500 enterprises from 35 countries on the ALBI blacklist (Feiler, 1998).

The sanction system worked in a three-tier manner that had many implications for the regional integration of Israel. The first boycott prevented any direct trade between Arab nations and Israel, thus denying Israel access to the regional markets (Bard, 2012). The second boycott punished the foreign businesses that operated in Israel, putting pressure on multinational companies to choose between the Arab and Israeli market. Finally, the third boycott punished all those companies that were associated with blacklisted firms, creating an intricate web of restrictions that made it impossible for anyone to do business with Israel (Feiler, 1998). This effective strategy of economic war had achieved complete isolation of Israel from the surrounding region, making it depend on the markets of faraway Europe, America, and Asia for its trade needs (World Bank, 2019).

However, the effect of the boycott was not limited to the economic sphere; it also played an important role in the diplomatic isolation of Israel. As of 1970, Israel had diplomatic relations with only 33 countries in the world; none of which was an Arab or Muslim country except Turkey and Iran (Brecher, 1972). After the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israel lost almost all of its diplomatic relationships in Africa after 29 countries decided to break ties following pressure exerted by the Arab League (Oded, 2010). Such diplomatic isolation made it seem like a pariah state, and as such, it could not be part of regional organizations or have normal political relations with its neighboring countries. In other words, this policy of isolation worked as both a cause and consequence of the bigger Arab-Israeli conflict, becoming a vicious circle that continued for many years to come (Alnasrawi, 1991).

The peace treaties between Israel and Egypt in 1979 and Israel and Jordan in 1994 were exceptions to the rule of isolation but did not bring about a regional shift. The treaty between Egypt and Israel, which had been negotiated with American mediation, created a framework for a land-for-peace deal, whereby Israel gave back the Sinai Peninsula and received recognition and security from Egypt (Quandt, 2005). However, despite the peace treaty, the Arabs League imposed sanctions on Egypt, as well as suspended its membership from the League and broke off diplomatic relations with most Arab countries (Susser, 2012). Egypt was suspended for ten years and only allowed back into the League in 1989, showing the consequences of breaching the Arab consensus concerning Israel. In the case of the treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994, even though less controversial than the earlier treaty because of Jordan's lesser importance strategically, it did not lead to acceptance of Israel by Arabs or change the pattern of diplomacy in

the region (Susser, 2012). The treaties continued to be exceptions, and the boycott of Israel by the Arab League went unchallenged.

Statement of the Problem

From one point of view, the Abraham Accords are a critical development in the politics of the Middle East in relation to the impact of those accords on the economic and security issues. From another perspective, such accords led to the emergence of patterns of interdependence between countries in the region that were robust enough to survive in spite of the renewed conflict in the region (Guzansky & Marshall, 2020). Nevertheless, the sustainability of this new era in the region depends on the settlement of the long-term issue of the Palestinians, the enlargement of the group, and the volatility of the region (Fakhro, 2024). Despite being a great accomplishment of pragmatic diplomacy, the future legacy of such agreements would depend on the ability of those agreements to move beyond a simple framework of governmental interaction.

The presented paper analyses the Abraham Accords in terms of the first five years, from 2020 to 2025. The period starts with the euphoria of normalization, continues with the fast growth of trade and investment connections, formation of the new institutions in the sphere of diplomacy and security, and finishes with the test given to the region by the Gaza war, which started in October 2023 (Guzansky & Podeh, 2025). During this time, the dramatic fall of the Assad regime in Syria occurred in December 2024, providing additional chances and doubts regarding the future geopolitics in the region. The research on the accords made during the period will allow understanding not only the revolutionary potential but also the vulnerability of these accords.

The importance of this research is conditioned by the analysis of the first major normalization of relations between Arabs and Israel in twenty-five years, which implies revolutionary changes in the geopolitical situation in the region. Although there are many works dedicated to some issues connected with the agreement (such as economics or the influence on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict), research giving a multi-dimensional view on the problem is less common (Guzansky & Marshall, 2020; Espín Ocampo, 2022). In order to fill this gap, this research focuses on trade and investment relations, diplomatic cooperation schemes, security adjustments, and expansion possibilities, thus providing a complete picture of the importance of the accords. It also makes a contribution to general theoretical debates regarding the connection between economic interdependence and political stability, the influence of public opinion on foreign policy at the state level, and conditions for practical cooperation despite fundamental ideological differences.

Research Objectives

The three primary objectives of this study are intended to offer a comprehensive view of the impact of the Abraham Accords on the Middle East region. First, it is important to examine the economic implications of the Abraham Accords on trade and investments between Israel and the signatory states. It should be noted that this task includes assessment of the dynamics of trade volumes, sectoral structure of the exchanges, and the role of official economic treaties, for instance, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed by Israel and the United Arab Emirates. This involves the analysis of institutional mechanisms including the Negev Forum, defense and intelligence integration by the use of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), as well as the strategic repositioning which has impacted regional alliances. The third aim involves the investigation into the possibilities of expanding the treaties to incorporate Saudi Arabia and post-Assad Syria, and the opportunities and challenges involved in this process.

In order to attain the aforementioned aims, there are three specific research questions to be addressed. The first research question concerns itself with how the Abraham Accords have influenced trade and investments between Israel and the treaty countries, and how the magnitude of economic growth and its influencing factors have been achieved. The second research question will inquire into the role played by the diplomatic collaboration under the treaties in countering the influence of Iran, specifically by investigating the role played by threat perception in security collaboration and institution building. The third research question is concerned with whether or not it would be possible for Saudi Arabia and post-Assad Syria to join the treaty in the future.

The theoretical approach applied in this research is interdependence theory, which serves as an appropriate basis for the comprehension of how economic cooperation can change the nature of political relations. According to the theory, states that have economic interests in each other are motivated to continue cooperating and are less likely to get into conflict because they face greater losses from disruption. Within the scope of the Abraham Accords, this theoretical approach may help understand how the processes of trading, investments, and joint projects create stakeholders interested in keeping stable relations. The idea of "complex interdependence" is especially relevant since it accepts the existence of geopolitical conflicts along with economic relations and identifies the fact that these relations can serve as factors that prevent conflicts by creating multiple interaction opportunities and making the use of force less useful.

Research Questions

1. How did the historical legacy of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Arab League boycott shape the conditions that made the Abraham Accords possible?
2. How has diplomatic and security cooperation under the Abraham Accords reshaped regional alliances?
3. How have the Abraham Accords transformed trade and investment between Israel and the signatory states?

Research Methodology

A qualitative design has been used for the research to capture the complexity of the dynamics of the Abraham Accords and their implications for the geopolitics of the Middle East. Primary sources are used in this study for the main part. Reports from international bodies such as the World Bank, IMF, and UN, and policy documents from think-tanks such as the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and Brookings Institution have been analyzed to evaluate the economic implications of the accords on trade and investment between Israel and the signatories. In this research study, the analysis of the accords between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan is done for diplomatic and economic implications. The approach used in this study is a comparative analysis of the Abraham Accords and their geopolitical implication. The comparative analysis in this study is of the relations between Israel and the Arab states before 2020 and after 2020 with the Accords, as the former involved relations of conflict and minimal diplomacy while the latter involves diplomacy with an aim of cooperation. Such an approach is based on interdependence theory, where mutual interests of economy and diplomacy lead to interdependence, a decrease in conflict, and an increase in stability.

Economic Impacts of the Abraham Accords

A. Trade Growth Trends (2020-2025)

Firstly, the Abraham Accords changed the economic connection that Israel maintained with their Arab partners from an informal and small-scale one to a formal and significant trade relationship. Before 2020, the economic connection was insignificant, as total trade between Israel and the signatories of the Abraham Accords reached only \$593 million in 2019, mostly informal diamond transactions with the UAE and other exchanges with Morocco (Abraham Accords

Peace Institute, [2023](#)). In 2022, the total trade volume reached approximately \$3.47 billion, which clearly demonstrates the immediate impact of normalization and the power of the Abraham Accords (Abraham Accords Peace Institute, [2023](#)). The growth did not stop in 2022 but continued in 2024 and beyond, resulting in total economic relations, including trade in services, defense exports, and investments worth more than \$10 billion in peak years, 127% more than in 2021 (Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel, [2024](#)).

First of all, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) that came into force on April 1, 2023, became one of the main drivers of such tremendous growth (UAE Ministry of Economy, [2023](#)). This arrangement resulted in the removal of tariffs on over 96 percent of tariff lines and 99 percent of trade value, providing a free and fair environment for conducting business across borders (UAE Ministry of Economy, [2023](#)). As of 2024, Israeli-UAE bilateral trade had climbed to around \$3.3 billion, experiencing an annual growth rate of 11 percent, while the total trade from 2021 to 2024 stood at above \$6.4 billion (Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel, [2024](#)). Monthly trade remained resilient, with December 2025 accounting for \$321.4 million in trade, marking a 32 percent year-over-year increase (Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel, [2025](#)).

B. Bilateral Trade Dynamics

Israel-UAE Trade Corridor

The Israel-UAE trade corridor became the principal driver of economic growth following the signing of the Abraham Accords. Israeli exports increased to the UAE in various areas, and total trade from 2020 through the first half of 2025 amounted to around \$11.5 billion, as reported by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel, [2025](#)). This sum is probably an underestimate of the actual economic impact, since it excludes the exchange of services, including technological, defense, and tourism transactions. The UAE became the biggest trading partner of Israel in the Arab world, and high-technology, defense, diamond, energy, agriculture, and financial service industries accounted for the growth of the trade channel (Abraham Accords Peace Institute, [2024](#)). The resilience of this corridor was put to the test during the 2023 Gaza conflict, but the flows showed incredible persistence, rebounding quickly from disruptions and remaining on an ascending trend (Institute for National Security Studies, [2025](#)). Such persistence corroborates the argument of the interdependence theory stating that robust economic links provide incentives for further cooperation regardless of political disagreements.

Israel-Morocco Trade

Economic exchanges between Israel and Morocco showed consistent growth, albeit less impressive than in the UAE corridor. Israel-Morocco bilateral trade increased from about \$13.7 million in 2019 to \$116 million in 2023, and is expected to reach \$240 million in 2024, with trade over 2021-2024 estimated at \$576 million (Abraham Accords Peace Institute, [2024](#)). This growth was mostly fueled by major defense deals in which Israel sold Morocco military equipment worth approximately \$2 billion for drones, air defense systems, and other technologies (Atlantic Council, [2025](#)). Besides defense, cooperation was also seen in the fields of agriculture, aerospace, and tourism thanks to a partial economic cooperation agreement signed by the two countries in February 2022 (Abraham Accords Peace Institute, [2023](#)). The growth of economic relations was somewhat limited by domestic political and public sentiments, and Moroccan support for normalization fell from 31% in 2021 to only 13% in 2024 (Arab Barometer, [2024](#)).

Israel-Bahrain Trade

The level of trade between Bahrain and Israel has increased from zero to 11.5 million dollars in 2023; the cumulative trade between 2021 and 2024 is estimated at around \$50 million (Abraham Accords Peace Institute, [2024](#)). The

areas of growth include technology, finance, telecommunications, and maritime logistics, owing to the country's role as a financial center and the presence of the U.S. Fifth Fleet in the region (Washington Institute, 2021). Nevertheless, due to political pressures, Bahrain did not go beyond a certain point, as it has a smaller economy compared to Israel and is relatively close to Saudi Arabia. The Bahraini parliament's call for suspension of trade relations amid the conflict in Gaza is a manifestation of such sensitivity (Washington Institute, 2024).

Israel-Sudan Trade

There existed a glaring difference with regard to Sudan compared to the other countries that were involved in the agreement; little trade took place between the two countries in spite of the normalization of ties through the agreement. The reason why Sudan decided to normalize its ties with Israel back in October 2020 and officially in January 2021 had more to do with the prospect of debt relief and being removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism than with any economic gains (Washington Institute, 2020). However, a coup in 2021 and the civil war which began in April 2023 prevented any agreements from being enforced, resulting in little trade between the two nations between 2020 and 2026 (Washington Institute, 2023).

C. Sectoral Composition of Trade

Trade expansion as a result of the Abraham Accords has not occurred in just one industry but has been diversified into different industries based on the comparative advantages of both Israel and its Arab partners. High technology and defense industries have been the main catalysts of the trade relationship, with defense exports from Israel to the signatories amounting to roughly \$791 million by the mid-2020s (SIPRI, 2025). Some notable defense acquisitions include SPYDER air defense systems, Hermes 900 unmanned aircraft systems, Barak MX missiles, and drone countermeasures, with most of the contracts including technology transfer and local production (Atlantic Council, 2025; SIPRI, 2024). Technological cooperation ranged from cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, financial technology, healthcare innovation, and digital services, thereby forming a platform for long-term cooperation beyond mere trade.

The energy and agriculture industries have also seen significant developments as the two countries sought common ground in sustainable development and food security in an area where water is scarce and reliant on imports for its food needs. Collaboration in this regard was aimed at developing renewable energy resources, water conservation and management, arid farming, irrigation technology, and mariculture, as evidenced by the UAE-Israel Energy Cooperation Agreement and investments in solar and gas projects demonstrating the potential for economic diversification beyond traditional energy sources. Such partnerships tackle essential problems on the regional level, resulting in common interests in stability and cooperation.

Tourism, aviation, and service industries flourished fast because of growing contacts between individuals after normalization. Free flights and visa arrangements provided Israelis with an opportunity to visit the UAE and Morocco easily, resulting in over two million Israelis having visited these countries starting from 2020. Such an influx of tourists facilitated the development of the hospitality industry, business tourism, and other services, thus yielding economic gains that went far beyond simple goods trading. The finance and investments sector also played a role by means of investing sovereign funds of the UAE in technology startups and joint ventures in Israel, but the scale of these sectors was relatively small compared to defense and technological sectors.

D. Key Economic Agreements

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food needs. Collaboration in this regard was aimed at developing renewable energy resources, water conservation and management, arid farming, irrigation technology, and mariculture, as evidenced by the UAE-Israel Energy Cooperation Agreement and investments in solar and gas projects demonstrating the potential for economic diversification beyond traditional energy sources (Chatham House, 2023). Such partnerships tackle essential problems on the regional level, resulting in common interests in stability and cooperation.

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The economic cooperation architecture was developed by a number of bilateral agreements that laid the groundwork for future growth through trade relationships. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between Israel and the UAE, concluded in May 2022 and becoming valid starting April 2023, was the first-ever free trade agreement between Israel and any Arab nation (UAE Ministry of Economy, 2023). This CEPA was meant to boost bilateral trade from an estimated \$2 billion to \$10 billion within five years by removing tariffs on goods, providing access to markets for service providers in finance, transport, communication, and environment sectors, and engaging in joint ventures, technology transfer, and innovation collaborations (UAE Ministry of Economy, 2023).

E. Facilitating Factors

There were several reasons for the accelerated growth of trade and investments under the Abraham Accords that facilitated the creation of an enabling environment for economic collaboration. First, there were direct flights from Tel Aviv to Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Bahrain, Casablanca, and Marrakesh, making it possible to quickly move tourists, businessmen, and diplomats and thus leading to a growth of tourists visiting Israel in the region (Abraham Accords Peace Institute, 2023; Chatham House, 2023). Second, logistics facilitations, such as the improvement of maritime and air cargo facilities, were used, and the ports of the UAE helped to create fast access for Israeli companies to Asia through trans-shipping and re-exporting (Chatham House, 2023).

Tariff reductions were significant, especially with the help of the Israel-UAE CEPA, which made tariffs zero on almost all goods traded, thus ensuring sustainable development even amid regional tensions (UAE Ministry of Economy, 2023). The agreement resulted in immediate advantages in services such as finance, transportation, and environmental technology, with estimated economic multipliers pointing towards the creation of over 150,000 job opportunities and production of \$75 billion in economic gains (RAND Corporation, 2021). Mediation by the U.S. and integration of CENTCOM served as facilitators that helped create a security umbrella under which economic cooperation could proceed without any threat of being disrupted by conflicts (Guzansky & Marshall, 2020).

F. Challenges and Limitations

While those accomplishments were indeed commendable, the economic consequences of the Abraham Accords experienced many difficulties and limitations. First, the Gaza conflict that started on October 7, 2023, hindered economic processes, causing a decrease in the number of tourists coming from Israel, air traffic, and some joint

projects (including energy projects and infrastructure developments) being temporarily suspended (Institute for National Security Studies, 2024). Public attitude changed radically in the Arab world, as only 13% of Moroccans supported normalization in 2024 compared to 31% in 2021, and the region-wide support remained under 13% even by 2025 according to Arab Barometer surveys (Arab Barometer, 2025). Such an attitude was demonstrated through several political steps, such as Bahrain recalling its ambassador and Morocco suspending flights during the conflict; this affected the reputation of Emirati companies and slowed down their business interactions (Vakil & Quilliam, 2023).

The unequal benefit distribution between signatory states is another major limitation. The United Arab Emirates managed to receive almost all trade and investments, while Morocco had moderate development, Bahrain saw limited expansion, and Sudan did not gain anything (Abraham Accords Peace Institute, 2024). This asymmetry would increase the possibility of regional economic inequalities and cause friction among the partner states that would not benefit equally from normalization. The structural problems of economic inequality between the signatories, lack of institutional capacity, and competition from external players such as China's Belt and Road Initiative hindered the accords from reaching their full potential (Chatham House, 2023). According to the predictions of the International Monetary Fund, even a renewal of hostilities in the region or an economic shock might bring the growth rate in the accords corridor down to less than 4.8% in 2026 (International Monetary Fund, 2024).

Diplomatic Relations and Security Cooperation

A. The Abraham Accords Declaration: Core Document

The Abraham Accords Declaration that was signed on September 15, 2020, in the White House provided the main principles that would guide the normalization of relations between Israel and its Arab partners. Quite short and consisting of about 210 words, the Declaration was specially designed not to include territorial details that were included in the peace agreements with Egypt back in 1979 and Jordan in 1994 (Singer, 2021). Unlike the previous land-for-peace agreement that involved the Israeli withdrawal from some of their territories, the Abraham Accords introduced an economic and security-centered approach. The major provision of the Declaration was to commit Israel to suspend the declaration of sovereignty in areas of the West Bank, a wording that enabled both sides to achieve success while avoiding discussing difficult questions in the future. Strategic ambiguity became the key principle of this agreement, allowing all the signatories to establish normalization without solving any controversial problems (Guzansky & Marshall, 2020).

B. Israel-UAE Treaty: Legal Framework

This legally binding contract, which is officially referred to as the "Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization Between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel," provided the full legal framework of bilateral relations. Specifically, article 1 of this treaty provided for peace, diplomatic relations, and normalization of bilateral relations, thereby creating a legal obligation to abstain from any hostilities (Israel & UAE, 2020). The requirement to establish resident ambassadors was outlined in Article 3, and this requirement was implemented in a very short time, as Israel opened its embassy in Abu Dhabi as early as January 2021, i.e., only 115 days since the signing of this treaty, followed by the establishment of the UAE embassy in Tel Aviv (Guzansky & Podeh, 2025).

Article 4 concerned security cooperation and included the obligation of both parties to refrain from any terrorist or hostile activities against each other and from supporting such activities abroad (Aspenia Online, 2025). Article 5 set forth fourteen fields of cooperation between the two states, which included finance and investments, civil aviation, tourism, energy, environment, health care, education, water resources, and legal cooperation, in an annex where

finance and investment agreements were considered critical for regional economic development. Most importantly, Article 6 dealt with the Palestine problem in about 100 words in very ambiguous wording, stating only that the two sides would make every effort to find a just, comprehensive, realistic, and durable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem without talking about a two-state solution, Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, or the 1967 borders. Such an intentional strategic omission gave each side the chance to interpret this provision in the way it suited its interests and avoided using any wording that could jeopardize the deal (Israel & UAE, 2020).

C. Bahrain-Israel Declaration

The Bahrain-Israel Declaration of Peace, Cooperation, and Constructive Diplomatic and Friendly Relations embraced principles akin to those of the UAE treaty, but it was formulated in a markedly shorter version, as Bahrain lacked institutional capacity for thorough normalization. It expressed appreciation for the pragmatic position of President Trump regarding peace-making efforts, and it pledged the two parties to develop diplomatic relations, open embassies, and cooperate in various sectors. It is important to note that the participation of Bahrain was especially indicative of Gulf-wide normalization due to the close connections between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, and because Bahrain was home to the U.S. Fifth Fleet. The declaration did not include the annex describing the sectors of cooperation, which had been mentioned in the UAE treaty; instead, it stated that cooperation would be determined through bilateral agreements (Guzansky & Podeh, 2025).

D. The Negev Forum

The formation of the Negev Forum in March 2022 marked a major shift from bilateral normalization to multilateral regional cooperation by building institutions for sustained engagement rather than one-time meetings. The Negev Forum, launched in Sde Boker, Israel, comprised the foreign ministers of Israel, the United States, Egypt, Morocco, the UAE, and Bahrain and consisted of six working groups on regional security, energy, tourism, health, education and coexistence, and food and water security. Three things made the Negev Forum significant: it institutionalized Arab-Israeli diplomacy without being contingent on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process; it included Egypt and Morocco besides the countries that signed the new accords, thus adopting a coalition-of-the-willing approach rather than the usual one of reaching consensus in the Arab League; and it created permanent secretariats and rotating chairmanship to provide for bureaucratic continuity regardless of any political developments in the member states (Guzansky & Podeh, 2025).

In September 2023, the Negev Forum had held a total of 42 meetings in the region through the working groups which yielded practical outputs such as "Desert Shield," a maritime communications system for exchanging information in real time organized by the United States Fifth Fleet in Bahrain; \$200 million regional fund to finance desalination and agricultural technologies, half-funded by each of the UAE and Israel; and establishment of a "Negev Tourism Corridor" enabling visa-free travel between member countries (Aspenia Online, 2025). Nevertheless, the activities of the forum were put on hold after the outbreak of the Gaza war in October 2023 (Guzansky & Podeh, 2025).

E. CENTCOM Integration and Security Cooperation

An important milestone in the evolution of security cooperation was the inclusion of Israel within the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), which happened officially on January 15, 2021, when the Pentagon transferred the military representative of Israel from European Command to CENTCOM, the command responsible for the Middle East region (Guzansky & Marshall, 2020). This move, requested by the UAE and Bahrain, allowed for exchanging classified information between Israel and the CENTCOM members via the Combined Air Operations Center at Al

Udeid Air Base in Qatar. It was an unprecedented strategic event since it meant that Arab countries under the jurisdiction of CENTCOM were ready to cooperate with Israel in terms of security (Guzansky & Podeh, 2025). From March 2021 to September 2023, Israel passed to CENTCOM members 1,280 intelligence reports regarding Iranian activity, which was almost three times more than the number of reports shared during the previous decade, and cooperation in air defenses against Iran's attacks on Israel in April and October 2024 and June 2025 showed the effectiveness of this integration (Institute for National Security Studies, 2025).

Moreover, the accords were successful in establishing enhanced security cooperation between both sides. As reported, at the beginning of 2022, after attacks by Houthis, Israel supplied the UAE with missile defense systems, and also in February 2025, the UAE allowed Israeli defense firms to take part in its international arms show (Guzansky & Podeh, 2025). In November 2021, Morocco became the country that signed a defense agreement with Israel, which is a historic case for an Arab country, and Morocco also purchased military equipment from Israel at a value of about \$2 billion (Institute for National Security Studies, 2025). In 2024, defense exports from Israel reached the maximum level of \$14.8 billion, with 12% going to the countries from the Abraham Accords against 3% in 2023, despite the war that still exists (Guzansky & Podeh, 2025).

F. Countering Iranian Influence: Strategic Realignment

The Abraham Accords, as such, were essentially based on the mutual perception of Iran's regional dominance as a threat to the signatories, thus bringing about strategic alignment based on mutual perceptions of threats. The mutual perception of threats from Iran's nuclear ambitions, sponsorship of Hamas and Hezbollah, and regional expansionism became the basis for the creation of "pragmatic alliances," where the ideology-based opposition to Israel was replaced with more urgent issues of security caused by the actions of Iran. The Israeli operations against Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis, carried out during the Gaza War, demonstrated the strategic capacity of Israel and curbed the regional power of Iran to some extent, thus creating opportunities for the expansion of the accords (Makovsky, 2025).

G. Diplomatic Resilience During Gaza Conflict

The eruption of the Gaza war on October 7, 2023, became the biggest challenge to the diplomatic arrangement of the Abraham Accords, and yet none of the contracting countries broke their diplomatic ties with Israel (Institute for National Security Studies, 2025). As a symbolic response in support of Palestinians, Bahrain withdrew its ambassador and put on hold all economic agreements with Israel; however, the communication channel between the two countries was kept open, whereas the President of the UAE Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan became the first Arab leader to speak with Prime Minister Netanyahu after the Hamas attack, thus proving his adherence to the Abraham Accords as a valuable asset of his country (Guzansky & Podeh, 2025). The existence of the accords was the manifestation of what some academics called "functional normalization," which is when states cooperate in line with their interests regardless of any moral or political crisis (Institute for National Security Studies, 2025). Nevertheless, the war became the point when the very nature of the accords changed, turning the peace agreement into a security and resilience one (Aspenia Online, 2025). The rift between elite pragmatism and popular sentiment became a crucial problem, as Arab public opinion became increasingly opposed to normalization in contrast with the government's strategic priorities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Abraham Accords have radically changed the geopolitics of the Middle East, establishing new patterns of economic interdependence and military cooperation that were impossible only several years ago. As for the economic

aspect, there has been a complete shift from close-to-zero trade flows to multi-billion-dollar partnerships, where the UAE-Israel route becomes the main driver of development, while defense, technology, and energy become the most important areas of cooperation. As far as the diplomatic aspect is concerned, a new approach to normalization is introduced through the "peace-for-peace" formula in contrast with the traditional one ("land-for-peace"), as well as the establishment of the Negev Forum and the integration of CENTCOM for unprecedented cooperation in the area of security. The strategic lack of details about the Palestinians in the documents is a deliberate design. Countering Iranian influence is another important motive; joint threat perception has enabled intelligence cooperation and joint action against Iran, clipping the influence of Iran in the region. Still, while elite-level achievements were successful, the same cannot be said about popular opposition, thus creating a dilemma between state and society, which will be a long-term challenge, while the Palestinian question will remain a key element of popular support. Prospects for expansion of the accord depend on the progress towards resolution of the Palestinian question, with Saudi Arabia playing the key role here, along with Syria after Assad.

Indeed, the Abraham Accords changed Middle East politics, creating a level of interdependence between governments which was able to survive even the Gaza war. Actual benefits for both parties' security and economy were achieved, but this process of change was far from being completed. Wider participation and further progress on the Palestinian question are needed for that. In other words, the Abraham Accords were successfully transformed from a peace accord into a security and resilience agreement, which could survive conflicts but could not resolve them.

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