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The Abraham Accords: the culmination of a decades-long normalization process between Israel and the UAE

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THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS: THE CULMINATION OF A DECADES-LONG

NORMALIZATION PROCESS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE UAE

Emily Sorkin

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Advisor: Professor Joshua Shifrinson

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Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) recently became the third Arab country and first Gulf state to advance an agreement normalizing relations with Israel—the first Arab nation to do so in 26 years.[1] After United States President Donald Trump announced the historic deal on August 13, 2020, Bahrain quickly followed suit on September 11 with its own agreement to formalize ties to Israel.[2] Leaders from Israel, the US, the UAE, and Bahrain ultimately convened at the White House on September 15 to officially sign the Abraham Accords, which established bilateral normalization agreements between Israel and its new Gulf partners, as well as inaugurated a new era in Middle East foreign policy.[3] In addition to Bahrain, the UAE's new partnership with Israel also allowed for Sudan and Morocco to normalize ties to Israel and join the Abraham Accords—albeit motivated by American incentives.[4] Even Muslim-majority Kosovo took advantage of this shift in Israeli foreign affairs to establish diplomatic ties to Israel, and Bhutan—which does not even have official relations with the US or China—also recently normalized ties to Israel.[5] Many speculate that Oman, Saudi Arabia, or Tunisia may be next to take such steps.[6]

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[1] David Makovsky, "How the Abraham Accords Look Forward, Not Back," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 16, 2020; Ann M. Callahan, "The Abraham Accords and Future Prospects," Universidad de Navarra, December 22, 2020.

[2] Jacob Magid and Raphael Ahren, "Bahrain Establishing Full Diplomatic Relations with Israel, Trump Announces," *The Times of Israel*, September 11, 2020.

[3] Quint Forgey, "'The Dawn of a New Middle East': Trump Celebrates Abraham Accords with White House Signing Ceremony," POLITICO, POLITICO, September 15, 2020.

[4] Carmiel Arbit, Cameron Hudson, and Jonathan H. Ferziger, "Experts React: Sudan and Israel Reach Historic Peace Agreement," Atlantic Council, Atlantic Council, October 23, 2020; "Israel, Morocco to Exchange Delegations next Month to Push Normalization Deal," The Times of Israel, January 29, 2021.

[5] "An Awkward Embrace," *The Economist,* Sep 12, 2020, 41; Rami Ayyub, "Israel and Kosovo Establish Diplomatic Relations in Virtual Ceremony," Reuters, February 1, 2021; Lahav Harkov, "Israel Normalizes Ties with Bhutan," The Jerusalem Post, December 13, 2020.

[6] Michael Rubin, "Who Will Israel Open Diplomatic Relations with next? Saudi Arabia? Oman?" American Enterprise Institute, August 17, 2020.

Israel's agreement with the UAE—formally named the 'Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization Between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel'—culminated decades of clandestine and increasingly overt connections between the two countries.[7] From initial furtive security and intelligence cooperation to the growth in secret business and trade deals, Emirati-Israeli collaboration continued to strengthen in past decades.[8] And with displays of public diplomacy and symbolic overtures in cultural events, these apparent connections between Israel and the UAE in recent years prompted many to envision an eventual formalization of this unofficial cooperation, though believed to be contingent on Israeli-Palestinian peace.[9] In this sense, the Abraham Accords were surprising, not because normalization between the Gulf States and Israel was a novel idea, but because formalizing relations between Israel and an Arab nation defied the presumed precondition of a settlement with the Palestinians.[10]

In this thesis, I aim to explain the timing of the UAE's normalization of relations with Israel, analyzing the Abraham Accords as a key case to understand the politics of normalization more generally. By investigating the history and evolution of Emirati-Israeli relations and analyzing theories of normalization, I intend to identify the conditions under which states decide to establish normal relations and elucidate why Israel and the UAE ultimately chose to do so. Recognizing that the UAE's decision to normalize ties to Israel largely paved the way for others to follow, I will be focusing my research on the evolution of Emirati-Israeli relations in

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[7] "Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization Between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel," opened for Signature September 15, 2020, *White House Statements & Releases*; Steve Hendrix, "Inside the Secret-Not-Secret Courtship between Israel and the United Arab Emirates," *The Washington Post*, August 14, 2020, sec. Middle East.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Philip Gordon, Report, Institute for National Security Studies, 2017, Accessed November 9, 2020.
[10] *Ibid.*

particular, which more clearly underscore the conditions under which states decide to formalize tacit cooperation.[11]

Several important factors have been identified to account for this shift in Emirati-Israeli relations. First, the UAE has portrayed and defended normalization as a strategic incentive to prevent Israeli annexation in the West Bank.[12] Although some scholars believe that the Accords instead indicate the marginalization of the Palestinian question—especially in contradicting the prevailing 2002 Arab Peace Initiative conditioning peace on a settlement with the Palestinians— the Palestinian cause remains a crucial consideration for the agreement.[13] Second, the Accords were largely facilitated by the mutual interest in containing the Iranian threat and countering its regional influence and nuclear ambitions.[14] This motive is apparent even to the Iranians, as influential Iranian politician Ali Motahari went so far as to concede his country's guilt, acknowledging that "we have frightened the Arabs and caused them to look to Israel as a foil."[15] Third, the role of the US in brokering the agreement is pronounced and exceptional. Not only did Israel's traditionally close relations with the US and the personal friendship of President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu further advance this historic moment for Israel, but the incentive to purchase F-35 Joint Strike Fighters also demonstrates America's critical role in facilitating the

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[11] "Bahrain Follows UAE to Normalise Ties with Israel," Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera Media Network, September 12, 2020.

[12] Yousef Al Otaiba, "Annexation Will Be a Serious Setback for Better Relations with the Arab World," ynetnews, June 12, 2020.

[13] Rauf Baker, "The Israel-UAE Peace Deal: A Master Stroke," Edited by Efraim Karsh, *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* No. 180 (September 2020): 17–19; "Arab Peace Initiative," S. Daniel Abraham Center for Peace, Accessed November 9, 2020.

[14] Udi Dekel and Noa Shusterman, "Behind the Scenes of the Abraham Accords: Insights from an INSS Cabinet," The Institute for National Security Studies, September 24, 2020.

[15] Ray Takeyh, "Are Gulf Arab States Aligning Toward Israel?" Council on Foreign Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, August 17, 2020.

Abraham Accords.[16] Yet, there are also more general circumstances that enable and support the normalization of relations between two countries, which I will ultimately highlight in this thesis.

In researching the timing and conditions under which Israel and the UAE decided to normalize relations, I anticipate this thesis to have consequential and pertinent theoretical and policy implications. First, by investigating the literature of normalization, I intend to provide a framework with which to consider the possibility of other Gulf States following suit and normalizing relations with Israel. Second, I explore the effectiveness of and potential for tacit cooperation to be used as a foreign policy strategy to achieve normal relations with another state. Overall, I expect my analysis of the Abraham Accords to be relevant for studies of cooperation, negotiation, conflict resolution, and normalization.

This thesis ultimately examines the culmination of a decades-long normalization process between the UAE and Israel, as codified in the Abraham Accords. First, I will define 'normalization,' explain its significance in analyzing the Accords, and demonstrate its value as a conflict resolution strategy. Next, I will describe the history of Israel's pursuit of normalization and compare Israel's treaties with Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE to emphasize the unique nature of the Abraham Accords. Then, I will analyze the theories that explain normalization, which conceptually support the normalization efforts between the UAE and Israel leading up to the Accords. Subsequently, I advance a twofold theory to explain the Abraham Accords as the official normalization of relations between Israel and the UAE, followed by a discussion of the empirical evidence to underpin this theory. To conclude, I will consider the implications of my research on the possibility of other Gulf States pursuing formal relations with Israel, the potential

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[16] Dana Stroul and Barbara A. Leaf, "The F-35 Triangle: America, Israel, the United Arab Emirates," War on the Rocks, September 15, 2020.

for tacit cooperation to serve as a strategy for states seeking normalization with other countries,

and the future of the strategic order of the Middle East as a result of the Abraham Accords.

Defining 'Normalization'

The Importance of Normalization

In the discourse and analysis surrounding the Abraham Accords, people often use terms such as 'diplomatic relations,' 'recognition,' and 'normalization' interchangeably. However, each of these terms has a distinct meaning and connotation that profoundly affect not only the conversation of UAE-Israel relations but also this thesis. Therefore, it is important to distinguish the meanings of each of these terms and establish the centrality of 'normalization' when investigating the formation of the Abraham Accords.

First, it would be erroneous to claim that the most profound aspect of the Accords is the establishment of diplomatic relations, which are simply the prerequisite for official diplomacy between two countries.[17] As described in *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy*, diplomatic relations are "the handle which opens the door to the establishment of embassies, both resident and non-resident, to the easy despatch of special missions, and hence to all the activity in which diplomats commonly engage."[18] In essence, the fact that two countries now have the ability to establish embassies, exchange ambassadors, and formally communicate through government representatives is not the most salient and remarkable component of the Accords.

Second, recognition alone does not encapsulate the duration, depth, and diversity of the longstanding tacit cooperation that preceded the Accords. In Ray E. E. Johnston's work on international recognition of states—specifically those resulting from partition—Johnston concludes that recognition is a political, not legal, determination, likening international

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[17] Ralph G. Feltham, "Diplomatic Relations," in *Diplomatic Handbook: Eighth Edition* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2012), pp. 1-8.

[18] Alan James, "Diplomatic Relations between States," in *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy*, ed. Costas M. Constantinou, Pauline Kerr, and Paul Sharp (Los Angeles, California: SAGE, 2016), pp. 257-267.

recognition to a "series of votes of confidence given by outsiders."[19] While unrecognized states do actively seek this respect from other countries, focusing solely on the recognition component of the Accords obscures the decades of implicit recognition and increasing respect and trust between the two parties through furtive cooperation.[20]

What is 'Normalization?'

Normalization—the focal point of this thesis—is difficult to define. Not only does the meaning of the term vary based on the country in question, but the discourse is also highly dependent on the region at hand. However, there are several works that, when examined together, can assemble a more cohesive idea of normalization. Before analyzing these contributions to the study of normalization, I draw upon the subsequent literature and outline a definition of 'normalization' for the purpose of this thesis:

> an ongoing process of increasing, deepening connections between two states to improve bilateral relations, as well as a conflict resolution strategy pursued before, during, and after a formal normalization agreement to alter the cost-benefit balance so that it is costly to maintain the status quo and advantageous to pursue and maintain full normalization.

In their analysis of normalization, Eiki Berg and Raul Toomla construct a "normalisation index" that assesses a state's integration into international society, its foreign trade, and its communications.[21] Although the index measures a state's integration with the global community as a whole, the variables used in their calculations are key indicators for what bilateral normalization entails. In citing Dov Lynch's advocacy for "a combined package of measures—

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[19] Ray E. E. Johnston, "Problems of International Status and International Recognition of New Nations Resulting from Partition," *Asian Perspective* 6, no. 1 (1982): pp. 133-150.

[20] James Ker-Lindsay, "Engagement without Recognition: the Limits of Diplomatic Interaction with Contested States," *International Affairs* 91, no. 2 (March 2015): pp. 267-285.

[21] Eiki Berg and Raul Toomla, "Forms of Normalisation in the Quest for De Facto Statehood," *The International Spectator* 44, no. 4 (2009): pp. 27-45.

economic, security, confidence-building and societal—that will support normalization," Berg and Toomla reinforce these diverse channels of interaction between countries as an important element of normalization, especially in the case of Israel and the Gulf states.[22]

Not only do Berg and Toomla properly identify the character of normalization as encompassing a wide assortment of connections between countries, but their 'normalisation index' also demonstrates that normalization efforts exist in different degrees prior to official normalization.[23] However, their definition of normalization falls short. In focusing on the quest for international recognition by 'de facto states'—a category that explicitly excludes Israel— Berg and Toomla inadequately contend that normalization is solely driven by the desire to attain legitimacy.[24] However, the aspiration for legitimacy alone is insufficient to explain the incentive for both states to pursue normalization. In effect, this rationale only accounts for the pariah state's objective for achieving normalization, neglecting to account for the accepted state's motive for normalizing relations with the unrecognized state.

Perhaps the most relevant and applicable work with a more comprehensive definition of normalization is Gadi Hitman and Chen Kertcher's paper on Arab-Israeli normalization during conflict. In analyzing conflict resolution efforts in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Hitman and Kertcher identify two strategies—normalization and reconciliation—that create positive relations between actors. First, the authors explicitly define normalization as "a strategy that focuses on structural issues that aim to improve the relations between the actors through the establishment of diplomatic relations, cooperation on economic issues, security arrangements and other affairs."[25]

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[22] *Ibid*, 29.
[23] *Ibid*, 43.
[24] *Ibid*, 27.
[25] Gadi Hitman and Chen Kertcher, "The Case for Arab-Israeli Normalization during Conflict," *The Journal for Interdisciplinary Middle Eastern Studies* 2 (2018): pp. 43-63.

This description mirrors the diverse channels of normalization outlined by Berg and Toomla. Yet, Hitman and Kertcher also distinguish a separate strategy of reconciliation, which involves cultural issues such as the media, educational programs, and cultural exchanges. In embracing Hitman and Kertcher's notion that these two strategies together work to develop positive relations between the states in the conflict—and recognizing the ambiguity of the "other affairs" included in their definition of normalization—I proceed by combining the two strategies under the one umbrella term 'normalization,' as it comprehensively encompasses all actions that states can pursue to improve relations.

Notably, Hitman and Kertcher also identify a more comprehensive and applicable explanation for why states pursue normalization, especially in regards to Arab-Israeli relations. As opposed to the one-sided notion that normalization is predicated on one state aspiring for legitimacy, Hitman and Kertcher view normalization as a two-sided strategy utilized to resolve conflict. In such 'intractable' conflicts—which are strongly rooted in socio-political-cultural identities, are prone to violence, and involve multiple actors—leaders view the conflict as a zero-sum game in which the costs of resolution are perceived to be larger than remaining in conflict.[26] The Arab-Israeli conflict aptly fits this description of 'intractability' as a regional conflict with a history of violence and driven by a powerful, all-encompassing grievance—the Arab states' refusal to accept Israel's assertion as independent, sovereign state.[27] Ultimately, Hitman and Kertcher demonstrate that actors in an 'intractable' conflict pursue normalization as a conflict resolution tactic. With the goal of settling a longstanding dispute, both states decide to alter the cost-benefit balance so that it is no longer too costly to make peace. In effect, implementing a

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[26] *Ibid,* 45.
[27] *Ibid*, 46.

policy of normalization progressively lowers the cost and magnifies the benefit of eventually establishing normal relations.

These foundational grounds for normalization are based on Hitman and Kertcher's important rejection of a concrete sequential order to conflict resolution. Recognizing that the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular is rather apt to "multi-dyadic conflict resolution processes," Hitman and Kertcher contend that normalization does not necessarily need to proceed a peace settlement.[28] In fact, the authors assert that normalization can occur before, during, and after a peace agreement has been reached.[29] Hitman and Kertcher summarize their findings:

> "Normalization is not just a tool for analysis or a strategy for a positivistic sequential spectrum; it is a tool that can build trust through shared interests and can ultimately contribute to the chances of the signing of peace agreements."[30]

Hence, not only can normalization take place at any and all stages of the conflict resolution process, but Hitman and Kertcher also emphasize its potential to enhance the success of a peace settlement when a strategy of normalization is initiated in advance to foster trust and shared interests.[31] This development further highlights another critical element of normalization—the distinction between a 'cold peace' and 'warm peace.' Although Egypt and Jordan concluded full peace agreements with Israel, the minimal normalization efforts that preceded and followed render these bilateral relationships a 'cold peace' by scholars.[32] In contrast, a 'warm peace' characterizes a peace agreement that has been "solidified by normalization."[33] Reflecting upon Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel, Russell E. Lucas explains the inevitable failure of normalization attempts between Israel and Jordan following the agreement and the ineluctable

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[28] *Ibid*, 51.
[29] *Ibid*, 52.
[30] *Ibid*, 62.
[31] *Ibid*.
[32] David Daoud and Varsha Koduvayur, "Welcome to a Brand-New Middle East," Foreign Policy, September 30, 2020.
[33] *Ibid*, 50.

cold peace that resulted. In effect, Lucas directly equates successful normalization with the unattainable warm peace between Israel and Jordan that could have exposed and embraced their covert cooperation and been "a stepping-stone to a new regional order."[34]

Similarly, in assessing the 1979 Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel, Marie-Christine Aulas highlights the peculiarity of normalization being explicitly stipulated in the peace treaty, which indicates a sense of obligation rather than a genuine, voluntary choice. Indeed, Aulas maintains that this "normalization is binding on the future, and in fact is binding on peace itself," which emphasizes a fundamental element of a cold peace.[35] Although Hitman and Kertcher conclude that normalization can occur at any and all points in the conflict resolution process, Aulas emphasizes that normalization efforts that are only first introduced in a peace treaty and expected to burgeon accordingly are destined to fall short and result in a cold peace. Yet, agreements that are grounded in an existing normalization process and then codified in a treaty are much more easily facilitated and more likely to develop into a warm peace.

It is important to understand that normalization is an ongoing process that can occur before, during, and after a peace treaty. In particular, one can see how pre-treaty collaboration effectively increases the chances of peace and official relations between two countries, as demonstrated by Hitman and Kertcher. When normalization efforts precede a formal agreement, I ultimately argue that normalization can be used as a deliberate strategy to facilitate rapprochement and peace, as well as build a genuine and dynamic relationship predicated on the stability of cooperation, trust, and respect. In essence, the Abraham Accords' centrality around normalization reflects the unique nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict, along with an equally unique

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[34] Russell E. Lucas, "The Death of Normalization with Israel," *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 1 (2004): pp. 93-111.
[35] Marie-Christine Aulas, "The Normalization of Egyptian-Israeli Relations," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1983): pp. 220-236.

tool to resolve it. And—with the convergence of an increasingly threatening security landscape, the leverage of the US as a broker, and the opportunity of annexation in the West Bank—Israel and the UAE seized an opportunity in 2020 to build upon their foundation of cooperation and normalization efforts to officially normalize relations through the Abraham Accords.

The Value of Normalization

As exemplified by the work of Hitman and Kertcher, normalization is a two-sided conflict resolution strategy that aims to settle longstanding conflict by altering the cost-benefit balance so that peace is no longer costly and instead beneficial. This view is also shared by Frederick Z. Brown, who asserts that normalization "is not a fixed destination [nor] the absence of conflict, it is the management of conflict."[36] In his comparison of American normalization efforts with both Vietnam and Cuba, Brown outlines several incentives for normalizing relations, ranging from economic and political advantages to family reconciliation. In the case of Cuba in particular, Dan Glickman echoes this assertion, contending that "all parties stand to benefit from the normalization of relations"—advantages that would manifest in trade flows, international diplomacy, and regional cooperation on immigration, the environment, agriculture, and even narcotics and human trafficking.[37] Yet, despite these acknowledged potential benefits, Brown highlights an important dimension of the normalization process that often hinders the pursuit of full normalization and its benefits—the dynamic between the accepted and unaccepted states. For instance, while official normalization was crucial for Vietnam and economically vital for

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[36] Frederick Z. Brown, "Cuba, Vietnam, and 'Normalization,'" Implications of Normalization (American University, May 2016).

[37] Dan Glickman, "Why Normalized US-Cuba Relations Benefit Both Countries," The Aspen Institute, November 30, 2016.

Cuba to attain, it was simply not a "life-or-death issue" for the US, who had the strong hand and

flexibility to pursue normalization at its own pace, despite the evident gains for both sides.[38]

      I. William Zartman reconciles this asymmetric dynamic with the cost-benefit analysis of

normalization through his concept of 'ripeness,' which explains how states are able to overcome

the status quo to attain the profuse gains of official normalization.[39] In such aforementioned

'intractable' conflicts, two states are stuck in a 'mutually hurting stalemate' (MHS), which harms

both sides in a continuous conflict in which neither party can win.[40] Yet, states are able to

resolve this MHS—which is based on a cost-benefit analysis and is consistent with the notion

that states are 'loss-averse'—when both states perceive a moment of ripeness that allows both

sides to pursue a "way out" of the MHS.[41] William M. LeoGrande similarly explains this

decision to escape the cost of the status quo and capitalize on potential gains of normalization

through the work of John W. Kingdon.[42] In his study on policy change, Kingdon identifies three

'streams' that must converge in order to facilitate major policy change, especially in such

"longstanding, well-entrenched policies and programmes."[43] These three elements include the

presence of policy change on policymakers' agendas, the availability of a feasible policy

solution, and the political viability of the policy solution.[44] LeoGrande further emphasizes the

political obstacles to embracing the advantages of normalization by presenting David A. Welch's

theory of foreign policy change. Recognizing that policymakers are risk-averse and that "inertia

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[38] Frederick Z. Brown, "Cuba, Vietnam, and 'Normalization,'" Implications of Normalization (American University, May 2016).

[39] I. William Zartman, "Ripeness," Beyond Intractability, September 17, 2020.

[40] *Ibid*.

[41] *Ibid*.

[42] William M. LeoGrande, "Normalizing US–Cuba Relations: Escaping the Shackles of the Past," *International Affairs* 91, no. 3 (2015): pp. 473-474.

[43] *Ibid*, 473.

[44] John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd ed. (Harlow: Pearson, 2014).

is the prevailing dynamic" of policymaking, Welch contends that overcoming this stalemate requires the perception that maintaining the status quo has become seriously costly.[45]

Ultimately, these theories and concepts explain the conditions necessary for states to overcome the disadvantages of the status quo and decide to pursue the mutual advantages of normalization. Even when attaining official normalization is more urgent for one state than the other, both states can assess the cost-benefit balance, recognize the value of normalization, and take advantage of a moment of ripeness to overcome political obstacles and officially normalize relations. As exemplified through American normalization efforts with Cuba and Vietnam, as well as Israeli relations with the Gulf states, full normalization proffers an assortment of gains for both parties. Along with political, economic, social, strategic, and cultural advantages, official normalization and peacebuilding also provide shared benefits through cooperation in public health, agriculture, security, energy, environment, and regional development.[46]

Just as the United States and Cuba had much to gain from normalization—despite their longstanding stalemate—the Arab-Israeli conflict is also characterized as a web of bilateral relationships riddled with largely untapped potential and mutual benefits.[47] Official normalization and its shared advantages were long presumed to be too costly for Arab nations in particular—mainly due to the assumption that the Arab Peace Initiative prevailed as the precondition for Arab-Israeli normalization, as well as the perception by risk-averse Arab nations that policy change would be too harmful.[48] However, as evident by the vast history of tacit

[45] William M. LeoGrande, "Normalizing US–Cuba Relations: Escaping the Shackles of the Past," *International Affairs* 91, no. 3 (2015): pp. 474; David A. Welch, *Painful Choices: A Theory of Foreign Policy Change*, Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005.

[46] Mai Albzour et al., "Support for 'Normalization' of Relations Between Palestinians and Israelis, and How It Relates to Contact and Resistance in the West Bank," *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 7, no. 2 (December 18, 2019): pp. 978-996.

[47] "Assessing Israel's Trade With Its Arab Neighbours," Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, August 14, 2018.

[48] Yoel Guzansky, "Israel and the Arab Gulf States: From Tacit Cooperation to Reconciliation?" *Israel Affairs* 21 (2015): pp. 131-147.

cooperation and the increasingly deep and overt connections between Israel and the Arab world in recent years, both sides were aware of the advantages of attaining closer ties and normalizing relations. In effect, this system of tacit cooperation enabled the Gulf states to amass the benefits of ties to Israel "without having to pay the price in terms of a febrile domestic base or wider regional challenges to their legitimacy."[49] However, the Abraham Accords' agenda to conclude bilateral agreements in a variety of spheres of mutual interest—everything from trade and investment to tourism and healthcare—reveals that there was still much to gain by both parties by embracing full normalization.[50] Consequently, both Israel and the UAE identified immense value in their decision to formally normalize relations—mutual gains that were ultimately calculated to outweigh the perceived costs of breaking free from the status quo during a moment of 'ripeness' in the summer of 2020.

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[49] Clive Jones and Yoel Guzansky, *Fraternal Enemies: Israel and the Gulf Monarchies* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 190.

[50] "Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization Between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel," opened for Signature September 15, 2020, *White House Statements & Releases*.

Israel's Pursuit of Normalization

Since its creation in 1948, Israel has had an exceptionally difficult and long pursuit of normal relations with its neighbors. Just hours after declaring independence, Israel was immediately countered by a declaration of war and invasion by five Arab countries (Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon), and subsequent conflicts in 1956, 1967, and 1973 exemplify the violent escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the hostile relations between Israel and its surrounding states.[51] Meanwhile, the Arab League in 1967 famously declared "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it," and this sentiment from the Khartoum Resolutions has generally endured in the region and has continued to guide Arab states' foreign policy with Israel today.[52] However, it is important to note that several countries—including many of the Gulf States—have pursued informal, largely secretive connections to Israel, such as Tunisia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, and the UAE.[53] Yet, Israel's endeavors to normalize relations with the Arab world have been considerably difficult and continue to be a struggle today. Overall, Israel's historically hostile and clandestine relations with its Arab neighbors have been anything but normal.

It was not until 1978 that Israel found success with the Camp David Accords, rendering Egypt the first Arab nation to normalize relations with Israel.[54] The culmination of years of secret negotiations, the treaty outlined the specific terms of peace after 30 years of conflict.[55]

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[51] Said Aly, Abdel Monem, Shai Feldman, and Khalīl Shiqāqī, *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
[52] *Ibid*; "The Khartoum Resolutions," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 1, 1967.
[53] Gadi Hitman and Chen Kertcher, "The Case for Arab-Israeli Normalization during Conflict," *The Journal for Interdisciplinary Middle Eastern Studies* 2 (2018): pp. 43-63.
[54] "An Enduring Peace: 25 Years after the Camp David Accords," Wilson Center, October 23, 2003.
[55] Arash Beidollah Khani, "Egyptian–Israeli Relations, History, Progress, Challenges and Prospects in the Middle East," *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)* 7, no. 3 (2013): pp. 93-120; Michael Yaffe, Robert Barron, and Lucy Kurtzer-Ellenbogen, "Middle East Peace: What Can We Learn from Camp David 40 Years Later?" United States Institute of Peace, March 26, 2019; "Peace Treaty Between the State of Israel and the Arab Republic of Egypt," conclusion date: March 26, 1979, *United Nations Peacemaker*.

Yet, by ending hostilities and normalizing relations with Israel, Egypt was cast a regional pariah—ousted from regional institutions and diplomatic relations with its Arab neighbors—and overwhelming opposition to the treaty escalated to the murder of President Anwar Sadat in 1981.[56] However, having understood that its inferior military was no match for Israeli forces and that maintaining the status quo would exacerbate its socioeconomic problems, Sadat pursued peace and normal relations as a logical, tactical move to end its pernicious conflict with Israel.[57] In this sense, Egypt's normalization with Israel was an existential choice to benefit its security and wellbeing—accepting domestic and regional backlash as the price for the value of peace and cooperation with Israel.

The second Arab country to normalize ties to Israel was Jordan in 1994, establishing full relations and settling fundamental issues between the two states.[58] After decades of conflict with Israel and years of clandestine meetings and negotiations, Jordan took advantage of the opportunity afforded by the 1993 Oslo Accords to formalize peace, reinvigorate its economy, and pursue closer ties to the West.[59] While Jordan had the support of Egypt, the peace treaty was met with substantial regional opposition.[60] Not only was Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin murdered one year later by an anti-peace extremist, but Syria also attempted to assassinate King Hussein and his brother, despite having attempted its own peace with Israel.[61] Just as Egypt

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[56] Said Aly, Abdel Monem, Shai Feldman, and Khalīl Shiqāqī, *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

[57] David Aviel,"Economic Implications of the Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel," *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* 12, no. 1 (1980): 57–75.

[58] Bruce Riedel, "25 Years on, Remembering the Path to Peace for Jordan and Israel," Brookings, The Brookings Institution, August 31, 2020.

[59] Said Aly, Abdel Monem, Shai Feldman, and Khalīl Shiqāqī, *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

[60] *Ibid*.

[61] Avi Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace*, London: Penguin Group, 2007.

pursued peace with Israel as a tactic to improve its economy and security, Jordan also capitalized on favorable conditions to prioritize its national interests and reap the benefits of normalization.

Among these two diplomatic successes are several failed attempts for normalization. While negotiations with Syria collapsed in 2000 due to border discrepancies, Turkey-mediated talks in 2008 eventually broke down, as well.[62] The Arab Spring in Syria also impeded a secret US-brokered process that began in 2010.[63] Lebanon, on the other hand, has been less amenable to normalizing relations, abrogating a 1983 security treaty a year later that planned to end hostilities and arrange normalization talks.[64] Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has pursued several plurilateral attempts for formal relations with Israel, including Crown Prince Fahd bin Abdulaziz's 1981 plan for regional peace, conditioned on the creation of a Palestinian state, the Palestinian right of return, and Israeli withdrawal from territories including East Jerusalem.[65] Another Saudi proposal—Crown Prince Abdullah's Arab Peace Initiative (API)—was endorsed by the Arab League in 2002.[66] In addition to Israeli withdrawal from occupied territory and a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem, the API predicated normalization between Israel and the Arab world on the establishment of a Palestinian state.[67] The normalization initiative was re-adopted by the Arab League in 2007 and has even received positive remarks by Israeli President Shimon Peres.[68] Enshrining the Arab commitment to the Palestinian cause, the API was widely

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[62] Stephen Zunes, "The Peace Process Between Israel and Syria," Institute for Policy Studies, May 7, 2014; Ahmed Khatib, "How the Syrian Regime Is Signaling Its Openness to Peace Talks," Center for Global Policy, September 28, 2020.

[63] Isabel Kershner, "Secret Israel-Syria Peace Talks Involved Golan Heights Exit," *The New York Times*, October 12, 2012.

[64] James R. Stocker, "Putting Out to Sea: What the History of Lebanese-Israeli Negotiations Can Tell Us About Current Negotiations Over a Maritime Boundary," War on the Rocks, November 12, 2020.

[65] Yoel Guzansky, "Israel and the Arab Gulf States: From Tacit Cooperation to Reconciliation?" *Israel Affairs* 21 (2015): pp. 131-147.

[66] Joseph Kostiner, "Saudi Arabia and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process: The Fluctuation of Regional Coordination," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 3 (December 2009): 417–29.

[67] *Ibid*.

[68] Gawdat Bahgat, "The Arab Peace Initiative: An Assessment," *Middle East Policy Council* XVI, no. 1 (n.d.).

viewed as the prevailing precondition and framework for any Arab state to normalize relations with Israel—that is, until the UAE abandoned the plan in pursuit of its own terms for normal relations with Israel in 2020.[69]

Israel's Treaties with Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE

The text of the treaties themselves also reveals fundamental differences in their pursuits of normalization. First, it should be noted that both of Israel's peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan are highly technical documents that precisely outline the terms to end decades of hostility and war. Consequently, the primary purpose of these treaties is to negotiate the terms of ceasefire and establish peace—a novel concept in and of itself at the time—and the language is quite sensible and conservative. In their 1979 Treaty of Peace, Egypt and Israel agree that "the normal relationship established between them will include full recognition, diplomatic, economic and cultural relations . . ." but only go as far as to characterize their nascent peaceful partnership as pursuing "good neighborly relations."[70] Jordan and Israel's 1994 Treaty of Peace uses identical language, outlining their "[desire] to develop friendly relations and co-operation between them."[71] Yet, because these vague, nominal positive relations are deemed contingent on completing and upholding the terms outlined in the treaties, the rhetoric demonstrates that the treaties themselves are merely the starting points at which normalization efforts can begin.

On the other hand, the Abraham Accords are not simply a peace treaty. After all, the UAE and Israel have never engaged in armed conflict and therefore have no territorial disputes

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[69] Philip Gordon, "Israel, the Arab States, and the Illusions of Normalization," *Institute for National Security Studies*, July 3, 2017.

[70] "Treaty of Peace Between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the State of Israel," conclusion date: March 26, 1979. *United Nations Treaty Series*, no. 17813.

[71] "Treaty of Peace Between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan." Conclusion date: October 26, 1994. *United Nations Treaty Series*, no. 35325.

to settle or permanent resolutions to delineate.[72] Rather, the Peace Agreement is a 'Treaty of

Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization,' indicating an explicit emphasis on

formally normalizing relations between the UAE and Israel. Rather than merely committing to

normal, friendly, and neighborly relations in the name of peace and stability, the Accords

embrace not only the potential benefits of official normalization but also a new vision for a

peaceful and prosperous region. It is clear from its structure and content that the primary purpose

of the Accords is to formalize a "full normalization" of relations and specify exactly how the

parties will effectively implement it.[73] The language employed in the agreement also signifies

both states' dedication and genuine interest in capitalizing on this opportunity to achieve a full

normalization of ties, emphasizing their desire to establish "co-operation and full normalization

of ties between them and their people . . . and to chart together a new path to unlock the vast

potential of their countries and of the region."[74] In this sense, the states clearly supersede the

goals of peace championed by Egypt and Jordan, as the UAE and Israel optimistically

"[reaffirm] their shared belief that the establishment of peace and full normalization between

them can help transform the Middle East by spurring economic growth, enhancing technological

innovation and forging closer people-to-people relations."[75]

The Abraham Accords

Aside from America's recurrent brokering role, the presence of furtive pre-treaty

negotiations, and the evasion of a comprehensive settlement to the Palestinian situation, the

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[72] David Makovsky, "How the Abraham Accords Look Forward, Not Back," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 16, 2020.
[73] "Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization Between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel," opened for Signature September 15, 2020, *White House Statements & Releases*.
[74] *Ibid*.
[75] *Ibid*.

Abraham Accords represent a significant divergence from Israel's normalization agreements with Egypt and Jordan. First, the Accords reflect a notable shift in regional interests and public opinion. As opposed to the reaction to Egypt and Jordan's peace treaties, protest against the Accords has been limited to obligatory and feeble condemnations by organizations, state officials, and political movements.[76] This weak regional objection is largely due to Israel's well-known and pervasive collaboration with the Gulf states in recent years.[77] And, notably, this lack of opposition indicates a discernable change in the region's prioritization of domestic issues over the Palestinian cause. While the UAE justifies the Accords with its prevention of Israeli annexation in the West Bank, many view normalization and the abandonment of the API as marginalizing the Palestinian agenda.[78] Yet, Michael Stephens asserts that the Accords are an important indication that "the two issues can be separated, politically, but also emotionally."[79] Political scientist Hillel Frisch highlights this detachment, contending that "populations are no longer clamoring for pan-Arab unity, pan-Islamic unity, the caliphate . . . They want better social welfare, greater economic opportunity, good education, innovation, the rule of law, and equality before the law at home."[80]

In survey findings published by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the Emiratis had the highest approval rating in the region of the Abraham Accords, and between June and October 2020, the number of those who supported business and sports ties to Israel had

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[76] "How the World Reacted to UAE, Israel Normalising Diplomatic Ties," Al Jazeera (Al Jazeera, August 15, 2020).
[77] Elham Fakhro, "An Open Affair: As the UAE and Israel Normalize Ties, Gulf Actors Respond," International Crisis Group, August 20, 2020.
[78] Carol Daniel Kasbari, "Abraham Abandoning the Palestinians," Middle East Institute, August 14, 2020.
[79] Michael Stephens and Aaron Stein, "The Abraham Accords: The View from the Gulf," Foreign Policy Research Institute, October 17, 2020.
[80] Hillel Frisch, "The Israel-UAE Agreement's Greatest Achievement: Little Arab Protest," *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 180 (September 2020).

tripled, with similar increases in Saudi and Bahraini opinion, as well.[81] Meanwhile, only a

quarter of Emiratis wanted the US to prioritize resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and

survey results also indicated growing frustration with Palestinian leadership.[82] Further, only 30%

of Emiratis supported Hamas in the Gulf states—the second lowest approval rating above Saudi

Arabia's 11%—with only a quarter of Emiratis under 30 approving of Hamas.[83] These findings

notably echo Frisch's generational diagnosis of the declining importance of the Palestinian cause

among younger Arabs in the region. With Bahrain and Sudan—both longtime advocates for the

Palestinians—soon following the UAE's path towards normalization, the Accords reveal a

significant shift in the regional consensus. Although the Arab world maintains its support for the

Palestinian cause, these results demonstrate that it will no longer supplant domestic priorities,

especially among the younger generations. And while the Saudis have reaffirmed its

commitment to normalizing relations with Israel only following a deal with the Palestinians, their

presumed direct support of the agreement indicates a remarkable shift in regional sentiment

toward Arab normalization with Israel.[84]

Second, in contrast to Israel's 'cold peace' with Egypt and Jordan, the relationship

between the UAE and Israel has already proven to be a 'warm peace.' Again, both Egypt and

Jordan outlined efforts to promote greater cooperation in their respective treaties, though their

relations with Israel remain limited, largely restricted to matters of security and diplomacy.[85]

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[81] David Pollock and Catherine Cleveland, "UAE Public Shifts Toward Peace with Israel-and with Qatar," The Washington Institute, December 10, 2020.
[82] *Ibid*.
[83] *Ibid*.
[84] Barbara Bibbo, "Normalisation with Israel Requires Palestinian State: Saudi FM," Al Jazeera, December 4, 2020; Renee Perper, "The Arab World Reacts to The Abraham Accords," The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, November 30, 2020.
[85] Michael Yaffe, Robert Barron, and Lucy Kurtzer-Ellenbogen, "Middle East Peace: What Can We Learn from Camp David 40 Years Later?" United States Institute of Peace, March 26, 2019; Robert Satloff, "The Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty: A Remarkable Document," *Middle East Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1995): 47–51.

Given the failures of Israel's futile negotiations with other Arab states and their lack of tacit cooperation, it is likely that a breakthrough agreement with Syria or Lebanon would have had similar results. On the other hand, Israel's 'warm peace' with the UAE has quickly expanded to areas like research collaboration, business and investment, and cultural exchange in the subsequent months—a level of collaboration that Egypt and Jordan have still yet to achieve.[86] As UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash explained following the Accords, "sometimes you have a formal political cooperation without really the functional cooperation supporting it, so for us it is very important . . . to put these functional cooperations in place."[87] This explicit embrace of a 'warm peace' by the UAE was a seemingly effortless transition from decades of tacit cooperation—genuine, pre-existing connections that ultimately facilitated the shift to normalized relations and formal cooperation. As opposed to the secret diplomatic talks in the years leading up to the 1979 and 1994 peace treaties, the informal economic, security, and cultural ties that accumulated over the past 50 years between the UAE and Israel effectively laid the foundation for an authentic and novel 'warm peace' between Israel and an Arab country. Although the timely convergence of several factors ultimately facilitated the Accords, this tacit cooperation was fundamental in facilitating the normalization agreement and solidifying a more collaborative, symbiotic partnership between Israel and the UAE as opposed to its predecessors.

Causes of the Abraham Accords

Despite the distinctions between Israel's normalization efforts and peace treaties with the Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE, there are several puzzling aspects of the Abraham Accords that

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[86] Seth J. Frantzman, "UAE Official on Peace with Israel: Getting to 'Yes' Was Quick, Easy," *The Jerusalem Post*, November 12, 2020.

[87] Anwar Gargash, "UAE's Anwar Gargash Says Israeli Pact Is 'Sovereign' Decision," interview by Manus Cranny, *Bloomberg Markets*, August 14, 2020.

remain: what ultimately explains Israel and the UAE's decision to officially normalize relations? Considering that Israel has ties with several Gulf states, why was the UAE the first Gulf state to take such formal diplomatic steps with Israel? Additionally, what accounts for the timing of the agreement, and why did this agreement materialize specifically in August 2020?

Before I can fully thoroughly answer these questions, it is important to understand how the long process of normalization between Israel and the UAE—especially the normalization efforts that preceded the agreement—was central to facilitating the Abraham Accords in the summer of 2020.

Literature Review: Theories that Explain Normalization

As described in depth later in this paper, the UAE and Israel have an extensive history of increasingly collaborative and overt cooperation that preceded the formal normalization in 2020. Ultimately, three main frameworks prevail that explain how these early normalization efforts and expanding ties enable the official normalization of relations between two states. These theories that explain normalization include the merits of communication theory, the functional approach, and the concept of a tacit security regime.

Communication Theory

A brief from the Emirates Policy Center following the announcement of the Abraham Accords Declaration in August 2020 is just one of many pieces that emphasize the process of normalization as a critical catalyst for the agreement. In other words, this trend of "expanding and deepening the extent of dealings between the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict" is believed to be "the most important gateway to achieving stability in the region," as well as reducing the chances of conflict and increasing opportunities for peacebuilding.[88] The theoretical basis for this perspective, however, stems largely from concepts such as communication theory, which essentially promotes the correlation between the amount of interaction between political units in a region and the potential for building confidence, common interests, and stability.[89]

In his 1963 book *The Nerves of Government*, political scientist Karl Deutsch advances a pioneering theory of communication predicated on the science of cybernetics. By basing his communication theory on mathematician Nobert Wiener's idea of cybernetics—the science of

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[88] "Dimensions and Significance of the Formation of a New Security and Strategic Environment After the UAE-Israeli Peace Treaty," Emirates Policy Center, August 20, 2020.
[89] *Ibid*.

control and communications—Deutsch foregrounds the importance of communication as "the cement that makes organisations [and] alone enables a group to think together, to see together, and to act together."[90] Although Deutsch's ideas are quite technical and focused on explicating foundational concepts and terms to support his communication model, the essence of his theory and its emphasis on the flows of information, increased cooperation, and the amplifying effect of communication are consequential for the field of international relations. For instance, Deutsch's assertion that the essence of politics is "the dependable coordination of human efforts and expectations for the attainment of the goals of society" can easily be applied to the domain of foreign relations.[91] Yet, political scientists have since directly drawn from communication theory and effectively connected its ideas to international politics. In fact, in their research on international cooperation, Stephen J. Majeski and Shane Fricks draw upon Deutsch's conclusion that communication increases trust and decreases suspicion between two actors.[92]

Incorporating neorealist assumptions, game theory, and experimentation, Majeski and Fricks explore whether communication allows states to cooperate more and defect less. In doing so, Majeski and Fricks identified several benefits that communication can confer on the international community, including the provision of information about choices, a greater sense of certainty, an understanding of coordination and trust, techniques to reduce fear and greed, and even a norm of intergroup cooperation or identity.[93] Ultimately, the researchers conclude that communication is an "effective mechanism for reducing fear and establishing trust between two groups."[94] Not only does communication facilitate the establishment of familiarity with opposing

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[90] Karl Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government; Models of Political Communication and Control* (London, UK: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963).
[91] *Ibid.*
[92] Stephen J. Majeski and Shane Fricks, "Conflict and Cooperation in International Relations," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39, no. 4 (1995): 622-45.
[93] *Ibid.*
[94] *Ibid*, 641.

groups, but the option to withdraw also enhances cooperation and minimizes defection.[95] The

work of Majeski and Fricks, along with the foundation of Karl Deutsch's communication theory,

clearly demonstrates the prevailing benefits of communication in fostering cooperation. These

merits of communication theory are evident in the tacit cooperation between the UAE and Israel,

which has proliferated since initial contacts in the 1970s and has culminated in the Accords.

Functionalism

Another perspective that accounts for the early cooperation between states prior to their

official normalization stems from the theory of functionalism. Although this framework usually

relates to international institutions—particularly the European Union and the United Nations—

this concept is constructive in analyzing inter-state integration and the potential for cooperation

between states, as well. In terms of the UAE and Israel, a prevalent explanation for their long

history of tacit cooperation and ultimate decision to establish formal ties revolves around the

confluence of their common economic, security, and political interests, which aptly aligns with

the essence of functionalism.

Largely viewed as the engineer of functionalist thought, David Mitrany introduced his

functional approach to international relations in a 1948 article discussing the restructuring of the

world order to prevent a third world war. As opposed to world federalism—which Mitrany

contends is a quixotic endeavor—Mitrany promotes functionalism as a promising framework to

facilitate cooperation in world politics. By focusing on common interests and needs, Mitrany

posits that functionalism can encourage countries to work together for the common good:

> "[Functionalism] should help to shift the emphasis from political issues which divide, to
> those social issues in which the interest of the peoples is plainly akin and collective; to
> shift the emphasis from power to problem and purpose . . . We must begin anew,

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[95] *Ibid*.

therefore, with a clear sense that the nations can be bound together into a world community only if we link them up by what unites, not by what divides."[96]

Ultimately, in "[emphasizing] the common index of need," the functional approach embraces utilizing cross-national needs as a starting point for inter-state collaboration.[97] By pooling together sovereignty rather than surrendering it to a supranational entity, functionalism also evades many political issues of inter-state coordination and provides valuable flexibility in adjusting the technical and membership considerations of inter-state arrangements. Because of this "virtue of technical self-determination" in which each function uniquely determines the nature and scope for its collaboration, Mitrany concludes that "the performance of a number of common functions is the way to create a normal community."[98]

While Mitrany presents his functional approach as a postwar solution for international integration, the argument that inter-state arrangements based on mutual interests, common needs, and specific 'functions' can encourage cooperation is noteworthy in the context of normalization. In fact, in his overview of the United Nations, scholar Thomas G. Weiss recalls the impact of Mitrany's contribution to international relations theory. Weiss emphasizes how this non-political and technical approach to international cooperation underscores the potential for small collaborative steps to evolve into larger arrangements of coordination.[99] Further, Weiss highlights how this ability to foster confidence and competencies between states enables "the thornier and tougher tasks of international peace and security [to] be tackled with greater

[96] David Mitrany, "The Functional Approach to World Organization," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 24, no. 3 (1948): 359.

[97] *Ibid*, 356.

[98] *Ibid*, 358.

[99] Thomas G. Weiss, "The United Nations: before, during and after 1945," *International Affairs* 91, no. 6 (2015): pp. 1221–35

likelihood of success," which some believed to be so great that war could someday be rendered impossible.[100]

Building from functionalism, the subsequent theory of neofunctionalism emerged in 1958 with Ernst B. Haas' book *The Uniting of Europe*. Although this work was primarily concerned with European regional integration in particular, optimistic about the ascendancy of supranationalism, and prone to retrospective self-critiquing, one of neofunctionalism's main components is consequential in analyzing inter-state cooperation, as well. An important element of Haas' theory is that cooperation between states in one sector facilitates integration in other policy areas, which illustrates the exponential potential of collaboration.[101] In effect, this 'spillover effect' posited that coordination in one functional area would most definitely spread to others. This neofunctional concept—in conjunction with foundational functional notions—is critical in understanding how cooperation breeds further cooperation between states. In analyzing the history of UAE-Israel relations, these theoretical ideas help explain how initial need-based, common interests and first contacts in the 1970s evolved into diverse, increasingly collaborative, and expansive ties by the time the two states decided to formalize their relations in 2020.

Tacit Security Regime

As opposed to communication theory and the frameworks of functionalism and neofunctionalism, the concept of a 'tacit security regime' is a much more recent and evolving concept. In their detailed study of Israel's relations with the Gulf states, Clive Jones and Yoel

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[100] *Ibid*, 1222.

[101] Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-1957* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958).

Guzansky provide a comprehensive overview of the literature on tacit security regimes on which they center their book, especially within the context of Israel's relations in the Middle East.

Rooted in the realist logic of the security dilemma, the notion of a 'security regime' combines the dominance of hard power considerations with the ability for states to pursue other compatible interests.[102] While Robert Jervis contends that security regimes are based on "principles, rules and norms that [engender] mutual reciprocity and restraint," Janice Gross Stein applied this reasoning to the Middle East in particular, concluding that the states in the Arab-Israeli conflict "recognised the rules of a game and the underlying principle of reciprocity involved."[103] Jones and Guzansky ultimately disapprove of Efraim Inbar and Shmuel Sandler's construct of a 'laissez faire security regime' between Israel and its Arab neighbors, as its focus on deterrence overshadows the consideration of the interactions between states.[104] However, Aharon Klieman's work on Israel and Jordan's pre-treaty relations offers a robust framework for evaluating the tacit security regime in particular. In developing the concept of a tacit security regime (TSR), Klieman describes it as a regime of "non-superpower, non-hegemonic, non-Western, non-contractual and non-institutionalised cooperation."[105] Advancing three key features of a TSR, Klieman concludes that national security exists as the primary goal of the regime, although other interests can be pursued, with both competition and cooperation concurrently transpiring in other realms.

In their 2019 book *Fraternal Enemies*, Jones and Guzansky apply Klieman's TSR framework to the relations between Israel and the Gulf states in particular, acknowledging that

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[102] Clive Jones and Yoel Guzansky, *Fraternal Enemies: Israel and the Gulf Monarchies* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 12.
[103] *Ibid*, 13-14.
[104] *Ibid*, 15-16.
[105] Aharon Klieman, "The Israel-Jordan Tacit Security Regime," in *Regional Security Regimes: Israel and Its Neighbours*, ed. Efraim Inbar (State University of New York Press, 1995), 129.

these interactions and arrangements are much more overt and diverse than those considered by

Klieman in analyzing Israel-Jordan ties. In doing so, Jones and Guzansky outline their own

paradigm for a TSR that reflects the relations between Israel and the Gulf monarchies:[106]

1. Geographical distance does not necessarily determine the scope and intensity of exchange between the actors.
2. The regime exists as a function of shared perception of threat (Iran), instead of a way for states to manage their relations with each other.
3. The actors in the TSR recognize ideational and emotive elements based on domestic legitimacy, which prevents more progressive ties.
4. The regime's intimacy indicates subjective perceptions about Great Power commitment to the actors' security, especially by the United States.
5. The TSR is not defined by other exchanges between actors, such as those in business and commerce; these diverse ties can instead be viewed as the use of Israel's soft power for the purpose of hard diplomatic gain.
6. The regime is dynamic and can evolve with ideational changes, as the regime allows for overt yet subtle signals that can impact public acceptance of more progressive dialogue and other strategic and political exchanges.

Jones and Guzansky contend that their model of a TSR is a valuable tool to understand relations

between Israel and the Gulf states, as "it allows security co-operation to be pursued between the

actors involved (most notably over Iran) but without compromising sensitive political positions

that might give rise to internal opposition."[107] The authors identify three fundamental sources of

shared security concerns between Israel and the Gulf that command the scope and composition

of the connections within the regime: Iran's increasing regional ambitions, the growth of non-

state armed groups, and mutual anxiety over the role of the US in the region.[108]

Although they hail the TSR as a valuable paradigm to understand the relations between

Israel and the Gulf states, Jones and Guzansky limit its potential to develop into full

normalization. Rather, they contend that the main purpose of the TSR is that it "allowed the Gulf

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[106] Clive Jones and Yoel Guzansky, *Fraternal Enemies: Israel and the Gulf Monarchies* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 18-19.
[107] *Ibid*, 11.
[108] *Ibid*, 19.

monarchies . . . to enjoy the advantages of dealing with Israel without having to pay the price in terms of a febrile domestic base or wiser regional challenges to their legitimacy."[109] In this sense, Jones and Guzansky were quite pessimistic about the prospect of this existing arrangement progressing into anything formal and denied that any of these states has any substantial incentive to pursue full normalization. Acknowledging the merit of the TSR in providing a template for assessing regional shifts in terms of alliances and security systems in general, Jones and Guzansky reinforce that "the TSR is a framework—not a linear process—to meet a defined end," which they identify as the containment of Iran.[110] This assertion—which was published a year before the Abraham Accords materialized—effectively rejects both the possibility of full normalization as well as the TSR's utility in achieving it. In retrospect, it is easy to point out that this reasoning was erroneous for positing that there is neither any desire nor potential among the actors to pursue official ties.[111] Consequently, in recognizing the success of the Abraham Accords, it is ultimately useful to consider the TSR's utility as a prospective strategy for states who aim to eventually establish formal normalization in the name of a common security interest.

Conclusion

Together, these three models—communication theory, functionalism, and the TSR—provide a theoretical basis for understanding the UAE and Israel's pre-Accords normalization. These frameworks not only explain how states can pursue cooperation but also how states can interact to achieve more collaborative, stable, and normal relations. Further, the literature reinforces the notion that normalization is a strategic process that builds trust, respect, and

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[109] *Ibid*, 190.
[110] *Ibid*, 198.
[111] *Ibid*, 189-90.

cooperation between states before, during, and after a peace agreement, providing valuable theoretical support for the utility of pre-Accords normalization to facilitate official ties between the UAE and Israel.

Although Jones and Guzansky reject the TSR's ability to evolve into official normalization, I contend that the TSR is a valuable factor that led to the Abraham Accords. Together with three fundamental elements—the regional security landscape, the role of the United States as a broker, and the consideration of the Palestinians—the TSR is an essential, foundational component of the decision for Israel and the UAE to officially normalize relations. In combining the merits of each of these theories and frameworks, I will now advance a new theory to explain why official normalization between the UAE and Israel materialized in August 2020.

A Theory to Explain the Official Normalization Between Israel and the UAE

Before I outline a theory to explain the official normalization between Israel and the UAE, it is important to clarify what 'official normalization' entails. Drawing from the work of Hitman and Kertcher, I have demonstrated that normalization is an ongoing process between two states to resolve conflict and improve relations. In particular, I have established that normalization can occur before, during, and after a peace settlement. Terms such as 'official,' 'formal,' and 'full' normalization refer to this 'during' period of normalization, which manifests in an agreement to officially normalize relations. In the case of the UAE and Israel, the Abraham Accords represent this 'official normalization,' which effectively codified and formalized the normalization efforts of tacit cooperation that preceded the agreement.

The following explanation for the Abraham Accords is twofold. First, the TSR of cooperation and pre-Accords normalization between the UAE and Israel laid the crucial foundation conducive to a formal agreement. Second, three essential factors—the regional security environment, the role of the United States, and the Palestinian situation—converged during the summer of 2020, which presented a propitious opportunity to capitalize on the benefits of official normalization. In this section, I outline the logic and structure of this theory, which will be followed by a discussion of the empirical evidence that tests and underpins the theory.

1. The Tacit Security Regime

Israel and the UAE have an extensive history of informal, secret ties, which have increasingly developed into much more diverse, overt links in recent years. As described by Jones and Guzansky, these longstanding connections between the UAE and Israel constitute a

TSR—an arrangement that enables security cooperation without jeopardizing delicate political considerations and provoking domestic opposition.[112] This dynamic not only allowed each state to reap the benefits of cooperation while avoiding internal and regional criticism, but the TSR also ultimately enabled both states to envision and embrace full normalization. As explained by the theories of communication and functionalism, these links effectively increased and strengthened the bilateral respect, stability, and confidence between the UAE and Israel.[113] This phenomenon is echoed by Hitman and Kertcher, who affirm that normalization is an ongoing process that can begin occurring before a peace agreement has been reached, which not only fosters trust and mutual interests but also increases the chances of successfully negotiating peace agreements.[114]

As opposed to Jones and Guzansky's shortsighted assertion that the TSR is simply a paradigm with which to analyze the relations between the UAE and Israel, the Emirati-Israeli TSR has proven its utility in evolving into fully normalized relations. After all, Jones and Guzansky's pessimism about an imminent normalization agreement does not preclude the TSR's ability to cultivate deeper cooperation. With its focus on security threats and strategic interests, Jones and Guzansky posit that the TSR's prioritization of security matters "[carries] the potential to instigate broader collaboration over the coming years."[115] Hence, the TSR is a crucial facilitator and vital component of the Abraham Accords. Without these foundational links between the UAE and Israel, these leaders stuck in an intractable conflict would have continued

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[112] Clive Jones and Yoel Guzansky, *Fraternal Enemies: Israel and the Gulf Monarchies* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 11.
[113] "Dimensions and Significance of the Formation of a New Security and Strategic Environment After the UAE-Israeli Peace Treaty," Emirates Policy Center, August 20, 2020.
[114] Gadi Hitman and Chen Kertcher, "The Case for Arab-Israeli Normalization during Conflict," *The Journal for Interdisciplinary Middle Eastern Studies* 2 (2018): pp. 43-63.
[115] Clive Jones and Yoel Guzansky, *Fraternal Enemies: Israel and the Gulf Monarchies* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 93.

to view the situation as a zero-sum game in which the costs of official normalization are greater than remaining in conflict. Yet, by pursuing a deliberate strategy of normalization prior to a formal treaty, the UAE and Israel were able to shift the cost-benefit balance so that the status quo became increasingly costly and formal relations became increasingly advantageous. In essence, the pre-Accords normalization efforts, as signified by the TSR, were a successful conflict resolution tactic in achieving official normalization between Israel and the UAE. Although the subsequent three factors more concisely pinpoint the timing of the Abraham Accords, the evolution of the TSR into more covert and deep ties by 2020 effectively put Israel and the UAE on the verge of full normalization and in a position in which both sides were able to pursue an agreement to formalize their tacit cooperation.

2. The Three Factors

Three fundamental factors more precisely explain the timing and conditions under which normalization was formalized between the UAE and Israel in August 2020. First, changes in the international and regional security landscape prompted a shift from tacit to formal cooperation. Second, the role of the United States as an international broker and the fear of mutual loss also drove the UAE and Israel to formalize normal relations in a bilateral agreement. Third—and perhaps the most consequential in regards to the exact timing of the Accords—the management and consideration of the Palestinians largely precipitated the decision to officially normalize ties.

1. The Security Landscape

As explained in their analysis of Israel-Gulf relations, Jones and Guzansky emphasize the principal function of tacit cooperation as being predicated on shared security threats and strategic

interests—particularly the containment of Iran.[116] Although Iran promptly termed the agreement

as "a strategic act of idiocy," the confluence of Emirati and Israeli concerns about Iranian

expansionism and aggression in the region aptly justify their move towards closer cooperation.[117]

It is important to note that the bulk of the non-military agreement focuses on collaboration in

non-military realms, and the only concrete security measure explicitly described in the Accords

is the vague plan to develop a 'Strategic Agenda for the Middle East' to "advance the cause of

peace, stability and prosperity" in the region.[118] However, in the words of one analyst, "despite

the narrative of 'peace' around the Abraham Accords, it is not to be forgotten that the harbinger

of this accord is deterrence—both political and military—against Iran."[119]

In addition to mutual concerns about expansionist Turkey and non-state adversaries in the

region, the escalation of the threat of Iran by the summer of 2020 was consequential in

facilitating Emirati and Israeli moves towards full normalization. While the Accords were by no

means a military alliance, emphasis on Israel and the UAE's buildup of a "counterrevolutionary

bloc" against both the Qatar-Turkey axis and Iran's network of regional proxies and allies

demonstrates the Accords' effectiveness in shifting the regional balance of power.[120] Regardless

of the content of the treaty—which primarily focuses on other realms of cooperation—the

Accords were largely the result of converging and escalating security threats and the increasing

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[116] Clive Jones and Yoel Guzansky, *Fraternal Enemies: Israel and the Gulf Monarchies* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 11.

[117] "Iran Condemns UAE Act of Establishing Ties with Zionist Regime," Islamic Republic News Agency, August 14, 2020.

[118] "Abraham Accords Peace Agreement: Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization Between the United Arab Emirates and the State of Israel," opened for Signature September 15, 2020, *White House Statements & Releases*.

[119] Kabir Taneja, "The Abrahamic Middle East — Will Israeli-Arab Alignment on Iran Create a New Equilibrium for Peace?" Observer Research Foundation, December 28, 2020.

[120] Jonathan Hoffman, "Why Gulf Nations Are Normalizing Ties with Israel," The Washington Post, September 24, 2020.

impetus for the UAE and Israel to effectively counter Iran's aggression and nuclear ambitions in the region.

2. The United States as a Broker and Valuable Ally

Reviving its traditional role as a broker in the Middle East, the United States demonstrated not only its utility as a credible and balanced mediator in facilitating the Abraham Accords but also as a dominant player in the Arab-Israeli conflict and Middle East as a whole. Despite American efforts to retrench its direct activity in the region, the US has continued to assert its authority and promote its interests, especially through allied governments such as the UAE and Israel.[121] These two countries, in return, consistently aim to curry favor with the US, which has not only brought the UAE and Israel closer in cooperation throughout the years but also incentivized both countries with the prospect of stronger relations with the US and greater American support in the region.[122]

The United States demonstrated its leverage and influence as a valuable ally in the region in two important ways. First, despite American commitments to upholding Israel's Qualitative Military Edge, the US agreed to sell F-35 jets and other advanced military equipment to the UAE, indicating America's interest in strengthening the burgeoning Emirati and Israeli axis against Iran and its proxies.[123] In addition to this strategic inducement, the US exemplified its role as a key player and partner in the Middle East through its efforts to contain Iran's nuclear ambitions. With Iran's flouting of the abandoned Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

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[121] "Can Joe Biden Get America out of the Middle East?" The Economist, March 3, 2021.
[122] Elisheva Rosman-Stollman, "Balancing Acts: The Gulf States and Israel," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 4 (2004): 185-208.
[123] Barbara A. Leaf and Dana Stroul, "The F-35 Triangle: America, Israel, the United Arab Emirates," War on the Rocks, September 15, 2020.

and increasingly defiant pursuit of nuclear capabilities, the President Trump not only had an incentive to finalize the official normalization between the UAE and Israel to solidify its partnership against the threat of Iran, but the US also confirmed its growing need to remain close to Israel and the UAE to manage Iran's nuclear aspirations.[124] Both Israel and the UAE have downplayed the extent to which the US might have played an active role in orchestrating the Abraham Accords; however, the US as a dominant force fostered a dynamic between the three states favorable to a successful normalization agreement, and the US' historic role in the region has not only brought the UAE and Israel closer together but also prompted other states to follow in normalizing relations with Israel.

3. Annexation and the Palestinian Question

While both the changing security landscape and the role of the United States created a dynamic between the UAE and Israel ripe for a formal agreement normalizing relations, the politics of the Palestinian cause and the proposed Israeli annexation of the West Bank ultimately propelled the Emiratis and Israelis to pursue full normalization in August 2020. It would erroneous to downplay the role and significance of the Palestinian issue in the formation of the Abraham Accords. After all, the Arab Peace Initiative has remained the presumed framework with which Arab states could seek official normalization with Israel since 2002, and a comprehensive settlement to the Palestinian situation was assumed to be the only explicit obstacle to normalization.[125] In fact, with the exceptions of Egypt and Jordan who evaded this

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[124] Kabir Taneja, "The Abrahamic Middle East — Will Israeli-Arab Alignment on Iran Create a New Equilibrium for Peace?" Observer Research Foundation, December 28, 2020.
[125] Gil Murciano, "The Abraham Accords: An Invitation to Rethink the Arab-Israeli Conflict," Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik: German Institute for International and Security Affairs, October 8, 2020.

precondition in their peace treaties with Israel, the Arab commitment to prioritizing the

Palestinian cause above all else has endured since before Israel's creation in 1948.

The Palestinian issue has long been embraced by the cause of Pan-Arabism, which grew

from nineteenth century European nationalist ideas, anti-colonialism, and the Arab desire to

rebuild what was lost.[126] Arab allegiance to the Palestinian cause has persisted for decades, with

one *Foreign Affairs* article from 1938 describing how the Arabs in Palestine used the "weapons"

of Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism in their opposition to the Jewish population.[127] In his article,

Robert Gale Woolbert described the how the Palestinian issue emerged as part of Pan-Arabism:

> "The dominant political tactic of the Arabs in Palestine, led by the Grand Mufti, has been
> to arouse the sympathy and, if possible, obtain the active assistance of the Arabs and
> Moslems everywhere. In short, His Eminence has tried to lift the Palestine question from
> its local setting and make it a Pan Arab and Pan Islamic problem."[128]

Woolbert's account of the 1937 Pan Arab Congress further demonstrates the longevity and

strength of this historic link, with its resolution that "Palestine is Arab and its preservation as

such is the duty of every Arab."[129] Elisheva Rosman-Stollman, meanwhile, illustrates a more

complex account of Pan-Arabism in the Gulf states. Before their independence in 1971, the Gulf

states were simply required by the Arab League to monetarily support the Palestinians and cast

anti-Israel votes, maintaining a hostility against Israel to placate their large Palestinian non-

citizen minorities, assert independence from Iran, and conform with regional sentiment.[130] All

while maintaining covert ties to Israel, the Gulf states only provided anti-Israel statements and

inconsistent economic sanctions until 1991, when the Gulf War and First Intifada led the Gulf

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[126] Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou, "The Rise and Fall of Pan-Arabism," in *Routledge Handbook of South-South Relations*, ed. Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), pp. 168-176.
[127] Robert Gale Woolbert, "Pan Arabism and the Palestine Problem," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1938.
[128] *Ibid*.
[129] *Ibid*.
[130] Elisheva Rosman-Stollman, "Balancing Acts: The Gulf States and Israel," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 4 (2004): 185-208.

states to champion and promote the Palestinian cause.[131] However, the fact that the Gulf states

took advantage of the 1993 Oslo Accords to eliminate secondary and tertiary boycotts on Israel

demonstrates their imperfect allegiance to the Palestinians, as well as their growing secret

connections with Israel.[132]

Regardless of the Gulf monarchies' wavering embrace of the Palestinian cause, the

Gulf's persisting commitment to the Pan-Arab movement's promotion of Palestinian rights and

statehood and its efficacy in preventing Arab-Israeli normalization are significant. Hence, it is

important to emphasize the political value that the Palestinians have continued to hold, especially

in the force of Pan-Arabism in the Middle East—even if the prioritization of their movement on

the regional agenda has dwindled in recent years. In his provocatively titled article "Why Do the

Arabs Hate the Palestinians?" Mordechai Kedar summarizes this view, explaining that the Arab

world "does not appreciate the expectation that it must mortgage its future and its very existence

to the internal fighting between the PLO and Hamas."[133] Although this analysis is not shared by

the majority of Arabs in the region who remain committed to the Palestinians—including the

UAE—it does highlight the declining preeminence of the Pan-Arab hold over Arab-Israeli

affairs. A 2019 public opinion survey published by *The Jordan Times* revealed that majorities in

most Arab nations think that normalization with Israel "may be a good thing," citing frustration,

fatigue from Palestinians' victim complex, and the potential for normalization to provide

economic benefits and leverage for Arab states to gain concessions from Israel to the

Palestinians.[134] While this data demonstrates a significant shift in public opinion about the

Palestinian cause—indicating a lesser prioritization of the Palestinians within the Arab world—

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[131] *Ibid.*

[132] *Ibid*, 194.

[133] Mordechai Kedar, "Why Do the Arabs Hate the Palestinians?" September 24, 2020.

[134] James J. Zogby, "Significant Changes in Arab Public Opinion," Jordan Times, February 17, 2020.

this survey also emphasizes the emerging justification for normalization with Israel—that it paradoxically has the possibility of furthering the Palestinian cause.

While Arabs in the Middle East are increasingly prioritizing domestic issues over the Palestinians, Pan-Arabism continues to inhibit Arab-Israeli rapprochement with its hold over the Palestinian issue. This persisting difficulty for Arab states to break free from Pan-Arabism's tradition of "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it" can be explained by the theory of path dependence.[135] Political scientist Margaret Levi narrowly defines path dependence, explaining that "once a country or region has started down a track, the costs of reversal are very high."[136] Hence, Levi contends that despite other choices, "the entrenchments of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice."[137] Paul Pierson combines this definition with economics to describe path dependence as "social processes that exhibit increasing returns."[138] In effect, Pierson emphasizes not only that inertia will prevent change but also that timing and sequencing is critical in changing policy.[139] By incorporating morphogenetic social theory, Ian Greener instead advances his own hypothesis that after a policy is implemented, a subsequent period of reproduction emerges in which the policy or institution must generate feedback mechanisms that create inertia, or possibly even increasing returns, to 'lock out' competing political ideas and vested interests."[140] Therefore, the establishment of a path-dependent policy will create an inertial force in which vested and cultural interests will have a high opportunity cost for changing the policy.

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[135] Said Aly, Abdel Monem, Shai Feldman, and Khalīl Shiqāqī, *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

[136] Margaret Levi, "A Model, a Method, and a Map: Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis," 1997.

[137] *Ibid*.

[138] Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *The American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (2000), 252.

[139] *Ibid*.

[140] Ian Greener, "The Potential of Path Dependence in Political Studies," *Politics* 25, no. 1 (2005), 68.

Echoing the aforementioned work of Zartman, LeoGrande, and Kingdon, the idea of path dependence emphasizes the challenge for political actors to reverse or alter existing policies, particularly when there is a perceived high cost for abandoning the status quo. The Pan-Arab commitment to the Palestinian cause—despite the recent decline of its prioritization in the region—represents a path-dependent policy that has been so entrenched in Middle East politics that it is difficult to change. This challenge accounts for much of the hesitance for Arab states to officially normalize relations with Israel. A specific example of this path dependence is the Arab Peace Initiative, which for eighteen years remained the prevailing framework under which Arab-Israeli rapprochement could transpire. Yet, with the opportunity provided by Israel's plan for annexation of the West Bank in 2020—a situation the UAE was able to manipulate to justify normalization with its proclaimed dedication to the Palestinian cause—the summer of 2020 became an ideal time for Israel and the UAE to pursue full normalization, especially with the shifting security environment and the US' participation as a broker and ally. In essence, with the endurance of the Palestinian question continually promoted and upheld by Pan-Arab sentiment, the UAE and Israel developed a creative policy solution to path dependence, provided by the debate over annexation leading up to the Abraham Accords.

Empirical Evidence

1. Tacit Security Regime

In order to determine how the Accords came to be, it is crucial to understand the extent, depth, and evolution of Emirati-Israeli relations, especially in the context of a TSR that emphasizes the primacy of security interests. Since its formation in 1971, the UAE has maintained informal ties with Israel that comprise a longstanding process of normalization, which facilitated and culminated in the 2020 Abraham Accords. These connections have manifested in the realms of security and intelligence, business and trade, diplomacy, regional cooperation, and culture.

Security and Intelligence

Israel and the UAE's long tradition of discreet ties first emerged from early intelligence contacts in the 1970s, since which each Israeli head of intelligence has maintained relationships with its Emirati counterpart.[141] These initial security connections soon expanded to the commercial sector, as many Israeli intelligence officials began establishing covert business relations with the UAE in the security industry after their service.[142] While the contracts between remain secret, the existence of the UAE and Israel's historic weapons trade is well-known, and some evidence of security and intelligence cooperation has come to light over the past decade.[143] Business dealings between Israeli firms and the Critical National Infrastructure Authority (which manages Emirati military and security affairs), for example, were revealed to have dated back to

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[141] Steve Hendrix, "Inside the Secret-Not-Secret Courtship between Israel and the United Arab Emirates," *The Washington Post*, August 14, 2020, sec. Middle East.

[142] *Ibid*.

[143] Jonathan H. Ferziger and Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel's Growing Ties with the Gulf Arab States*, Atlantic Council, July 2020.

2007, in which Israeli businessman Mati Kochavi, owner of Swiss-registered company AGT, sold an alleged $800 million worth of security equipment to the UAE for surveillance of strategic oil fields and infrastructure.[144] These security and intelligence links were likely driven by overlapping security interests just as much as the economic ambitions of individual companies, businesspeople, and stakeholders. Moreover, a cable uncovered by Wikileaks in 2010 revealed that Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah Ibn Zayeed maintained a "good and personal relationship" with "secret and persistent dialogue."[145] Although Israeli-Emirati relations soured earlier that year following the Mossad's alleged assassination of Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in Dubai, this interlude was short-lived and was even used as leverage for Israel to well weapons technology to the UAE.[146]

At this point, Israeli-Emirati collaboration was becoming more evident, with the UAE launching their Falcon Eye surveillance system with blatant ties to Israeli intelligence in 2016 and the two countries participating in multinational air force exercises together in 2017.[147] Amid the growing shared threat of Iran in the region, Emirati officials were also becoming more vocal about their support for and the benefits of security ties with Israel. In a series of tweets in 2016, Lieutenant General Dahi Khalfan Tamim, head of security for the Dubai Emirate, asked his followers not to "treat Jews as enemies," likely referring to Iran in insisting that "rapprochement will solve problems. Why shouldn't we have a coalition with the Jews against the enemies of the Middle East?"[148] Widely viewed as a harbinger for the Accords, an op-ed written by UAE Ambassador to the US Yousef Al Otaiba for an Israeli newspaper earlier in 2020 emphasized the

[144] "Emirates 'Has Security Links with Israel,'" UPI, UPI, January 27, 2012.
[145] Barak Ravid, "WikiLeaks Blows Cover Off Israel's Covert Gulf States Ties," *Haaretz*, November 29, 2010.
[146] Steve Hendrix, "Inside the Secret-Not-Secret Courtship between Israel and the United Arab Emirates,"
[147] Rori Donaghy, "Abu Dhabi Announces Launch of Israeli-Installed Mass Surveillance System," openDemocracy, July 15, 2016; Jonathan H. Ferziger and Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel's Growing Ties with the Gulf Arab States*.
[148] Dov Lieber, "In Twitter Blitz, Dubai Security Chief Opposes Palestinian State, Urges Coalition with Israel," *The Times of Israel*, March 24, 2016.

advantages of closer security cooperation that could be possible should Israel abandon its plans

for annexation.[149] "With the region's two most capable militaries, common concerns about

terrorism and aggression, and a deep and long relationship with the United States, the UAE and

Israel could form closer and more effective security cooperation . . . We face too many common

dangers and see the great potential of warmer ties," Al Otaiba explained.[150] Amid their mutual

perceived threat of Iran, the UAE and Israel have already begun capitalizing on their normalized

security and intelligence relations in the months following the Accords.

Business and Trade

Although the Arab League has technically sustained a boycott against Israel since 1951,

the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) opted to end its secondary and tertiary boycotts on Israel

following the Oslo Accords in 1994, opening their countries to Israeli markets.[151] Along with the

desire to attain untapped profits, the UAE and Israel also pursued economic ties due to the

initiative of private individuals and organizations aiming to improve relations between the two

countries.[152] These covert economic connections began to proliferate in the 1990s, with business

executives such as Jon Medved using foreign passports to conclude deals in the UAE.[153] The

lucrative diamond industry, for example, has historically taken advantage of third countries for

the UAE and Israel to furtively conduct trade.[154] In addition to these considerable back-channel

dealings, the UAE imported $138.4 million worth of Israeli goods between 2008 and 2013, with

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[149] Yousef Al Otaiba, "Annexation Will Be a Serious Setback for Better Relations with the Arab World," ynetnews, June 12, 2020.
[150] *Ibid*.
[151] Elisheva Rosman-Stollman, "Balancing Acts: The Gulf States and Israel," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 4 (2004): 194.
[152] Jeremy Sharon, "The 'Private Diplomacy' That Laid Groundwork for UAE, Bahrain Agreements," *The Jerusalem Post*, September 13, 2020.
[153] Steve Hendrix, "Inside the Secret-Not-Secret Courtship between Israel and the United Arab Emirates."
[154] Alexander Cornwell, "UAE-Israel Accord Could Bring New Sparkle to Dubai Diamond Trade," Reuters, October 7, 2020

Israel exporting $5.3 million worth of goods and services to the UAE in 2013 alone.[155] While

collaboration and joint ventures between Emirati and Israeli port enterprises date back to the

early 2000s, a recent investment of $15 billion by an Emirati sovereign wealth fund in Israeli

entrepreneur's WeWork company indicates that economic ties between the two countries have

only burgeoned in recent years.[156] By officially normalizing relations, the UAE and Israel have

"[actualized] immense economic and business potential," with Israeli exports estimated to grow

to $300-350 million annually and the newly established Abraham Fund pooling more than $3

billion from the US, UAE, and Israel to promote regional prosperity and coordination.[157]

Diplomacy

The 1991 Madrid Conference's peacemaking efforts between Israel and the Palestinians

effectively marked the "beginning of a process of normalization" in the realm of diplomacy, as

the Gulf States began pursuing more diplomatic collaboration with Israel, especially following

the Oslo Accords in 1993.[158] Soon enough, Jeremy Issacharoff in 1994 became the first Israeli

diplomat to meet an Emirati official to discuss Emirati military interests.[159] That same year, such

diplomatic discourse was further facilitated by the establishment of the Emirates Center for

Strategic Studies and Research, a government-backed think tank used as a vessel for contacts

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[155] Gadi Hitman and Chen Kertcher, "The Case for Arab-Israeli Normalization during Conflict," *The Journal for Interdisciplinary Middle Eastern Studies* 2, (Spring, 2018): 43-63; Clive A. Jones and Yoel Guzansky, "Israel's relations with the Gulf states: toward the emergence of a tacit security regime?" *Contemporary Security Policy*, 38, no. 3 (2017): 398-419.

[156] "Israeli Carrier Zim Sides with DP World," American Shipper, March 3, 2006; Gillian Tan and Giles Turner, "SoftBank Backers Rethink Role in Next Vision Fund on WeWork," Bloomberg. Bloomberg, September 16, 2019.

[157] Yoel Guzansky and Gilead Sher, "The United Arab Emirates and Israel Just Came Clean on Their Extra-Marital Affair," War on the Rocks, August 28, 2020; "Israel, UAE Sign Four Agreements Including Visa-Exemption Deal," Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera Media Network, October 20, 2020; "Israel Said to Estimate UAE Deal Worth Hundreds of Millions in Trade a Year," The Times of Israel, August 16, 2020.

[158] Elisheva Rosman-Stollman, "Balancing Acts: The Gulf States and Israel," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 4 (2004): 194.

[159] Raphael Ahren, "26 Years after First Israeli-UAE Meet, New Ties Bring a Diplomat Full Circle," *The Times of Israel*, September 17, 2020.

with Israel.[160] By the early 2000s under George W. Bush's presidency, Israeli officials

participated in secret hotel room meetings in Washington, D.C. with the UAE's Ambassador to

the US, Yousef Al Otaiba, which continued through President Barack Obama's administration.[161]

In 2009, Israel supported the headquarters of the UN International Renewable Energy

Association (IRENA) being located in Abu Dhabi, portending its function as a means for

communication between the two countries.[162] Following the visit of two Israeli officials to the

office three months earlier, Israeli Minister of Infrastructure Uzi Landau's attendance at the

IRENA conference in 2010 was the first official visit of an Israeli minister to the UAE, and a

permanent Israeli representative has remained at the IRENA headquarters since 2015.[163]

Both informal and overt diplomatic ties between Israel and the UAE have expanded in

recent years. In 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly met with senior

UAE leaders in Cyprus to discuss their shared dissatisfaction with the Iran deal, and Israel's UN

ambassador Danny Danon visited Dubai for further discussions about Iran a year later.[164] In

2019, Netanyahu met with senior Arab officials and foreign ministers and even posed for photos

with them at the Warsaw Summit.[165] And, in recent years Emirati-Israeli relations have also

increasingly become more apparent, with decades of diplomatic work by delegations of Jewish

American leaders becoming public knowledge.[166] As American Jewish Committee leader and

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[160] Linah Alsaafin, "How Did Israel and the UAE Get to Normalising Relations?" Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera Media Network, August 14, 2020.

[161] Steve Hendrix, "Inside the Secret-Not-Secret Courtship between Israel and the United Arab Emirates."

[162] Daniel Wagner and Giorgio Cafiero, "What Does Israel Want With the UAE?" The National Interest, The Center for the National Interest, January 5, 2016.

[163] Yoel Guzansky, "Israel and the Arab Gulf States: From Tacit Cooperation to Reconciliation?" *Israel Affairs* 21 (2015): pp. 131-147; Jonathan H. Ferziger and Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel's Growing Ties with the Gulf Arab States*, Atlantic Council, July 2020.

[164] Adam Entous, "Donald Trump's New World Order," *The New Yorker* no. June 18, 2018, June 11, 2018; Steve Hendrix, "Inside the Secret-Not-Secret Courtship between Israel and the United Arab Emirates."

[165] Jonathan H. Ferziger and Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel's Growing Ties with the Gulf Arab States*.

[166] Alex Traiman, "U.S. Jewish Leaders See Ally in Emirates," *The Jewish Star*, February 22, 2018.

longtime delegate to the UAE Jason Isaacson explains, such private diplomacy is crucial, as it

"[builds] trust, [proves] that the promise of benefits can be realized, and [builds] momentum for

peace and cooperation."[167] Israel and the UAE have already begun to reap the benefits of normal

relations, with plans to establish embassies and exchange ambassadors and countless diplomatic

meetings within months of the Accords.[168]

Regional Cooperation

As opposed to the long history of covert cooperation in the realms of security, economy,

and diplomacy, Israeli-Emirati collaboration in regional initiatives is a more recent phenomenon.

The Gulf states have only been secretly working with Israel in addressing regional water scarcity

since the 1990s, while healthcare has become a promising sector for further partnership in recent

years, with Israeli hospitals as a destination of medical tourism by prominent Gulf patients.[169] In

2019, Dr. Yitshak Kreiss, director-general of the Sheba Medical Center in Israel, attended the

Peace to Prosperity Workshop in Bahrain where he discussed with Gulf officials the prospect of

establishing medical ties; by June 2020 it was announced that the UAE and Israel had been

cooperating in researching the coronavirus pandemic.[170]

Other regional efforts have included collaboration in desert agriculture, energy sources,

other areas of scientific research, and even a proposed regional train network.[171] Using Israel as a

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[167] Jeremy Sharon, "The 'Private Diplomacy' That Laid Groundwork for UAE, Bahrain Agreements," *The Jerusalem Post*, September 13, 2020.

[168] "Israel, UAE Sign Four Agreements Including Visa-Exemption Deal," Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera Media Network, October 20, 2020.

[169] Jonathan H. Ferziger and Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel's Growing Ties with the Gulf Arab States*; "Israel's Medical Tourism Flourishing Thanks to Persian Gulf Arabs," Iran Front Page, May 30, 2017.

[170] Nathan Jeffay, "Coming Soon to Israel: Medical Tourism from UAE, as Part of New Hospital Deal," *The Times of Israel*, September 11, 2020; Jonathan H. Ferziger and Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel's Growing Ties with the Gulf Arab States*.

[171] *Ibid*.

land bridge to connect the port of Haifa to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the project—unveiled during a visit to the UAE by Israeli Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz—aims to promote regional trade and peace.[172] In detailing the history and prospects for normalization between Israel and Arab countries, scholars Gadi Hitman and Chen Kertcher conclude that "the fact that both sides share common goals involving the development of new energy, water, and agricultural technology" has largely made this expansion of collaboration in recent years possible.[173]

Culture

An even more nascent and public area of cooperation between the UAE and Israel has been in cultural overtures, which have been essential in acclimating each society to closer ties and developing genuine connections as a foundation for normalization. In 2018, former Israeli Minister of Culture and Sports Miri Regev attended a judo competition in Abu Dhabi, which was the first time an Israeli delegation participated under its national flag and the Israeli national anthem was played in the UAE.[174] Sports have continued to become a propitious sector for cultural integration in the Gulf, with Israel invited to participate in the 2020 UAE Tour, as well as the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.[175] Perhaps the most remarkable overture thus far has been Israel's invitation to attend the Dubai Expo (now postponed to 2021), in which Israel will be able to showcase its innovations in science and technology to a global audience in the UAE.[176]

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[172] "Israel Unveils Details of Railway Connection to Saudi, UAE," Middle East Monitor, July 27, 2019.

[173] Gadi Hitman and Chen Kertcher, "The Case for Arab-Israeli Normalization during Conflict," *The Journal for Interdisciplinary Middle Eastern Studies* 2, (Spring, 2018): 60.

[174] "Israel Wins Second Judo Gold in Abu Dhabi, 'Hatikva' Plays Again," *The Times of Israel*, October 29, 2018.

[175] Zachary Keyser, "Israeli Cycling Team Set to Compete in the 2020 UAE Tour," *The Jerusalem Post*, February 23, 2020; Zachary Keyser, "Qatar World Cup Official to ESPN: Israelis Can Attend the 2022 Tournament," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 31, 2019.

[176] Aron Heller, "Israel Says Expo 2020 in Dubai Is a Bridge to Arab World," AP NEWS, Associated Press, November 11, 2019.

The UAE and Israel have also actively been promoting religious acceptance and integration in recent years, which tourism has the potential to further expand, especially with Muslim visitors to sacred sites in Jerusalem.[177] Historically, 850,000 Jewish refugees have been expelled from the region's Arab countries over the past six decades; Jews continue to be refused entry to the Gulf states and many Arab states, and surely anti-Semitic sentiment still remains in these countries.[178] However, since its creation in 1971, a small Jewish community has remained in the UAE, which the country has made substantial efforts to support.[179] Not only is the UAE now home to two synagogues and a recognized Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community of the Emirates, but kosher food has also been made more accessible in the country.[180] Meanwhile, in 2019, the UAE announced the construction of an interfaith complex in Abu Dhabi.[181] Consisting of a church, mosque, and synagogue, the Abrahamic Family House aims to promote the acceptance of and peace between the three Abrahamic faiths—an omen of the sentiment behind the name of the Abraham Accords signed just a year later.

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The record of tacit cooperation between the UAE and Israel in the realms of security and intelligence, business and trade, diplomacy, regional cooperation, and culture constitute a TSR: an arrangement that permits collaboration on shared security interests while avoiding the incitement of political sensitivities. As outlined above, the increasingly public and extensive nature of collaboration between the UAE and Israel not only reached its zenith in 2020—with government officials and leaders openly visiting and meeting—but also received little vocal

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[177] Michal Raz-Chaimovitz, "Israel Awaits Influx of Muslim Tourists," Globes, November 10, 2020.
[178] Ron Prosor, "The Middle East's Greatest Untold Story," HuffPost, HuffPost, September 4, 2012; Jonathan H. Ferziger and Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel's Growing Ties with the Gulf Arab States*.
[179] "United Arab Emirates Virtual Jewish History Tour," Jewish Virtual Library, Accessed December 4, 2020.
[180] Jonathan H. Ferziger and Gawdat Bahgat, *Israel's Growing Ties with the Gulf Arab States*.
[181] Lizzie Crook, "David Adjaye Designs Multifaith Complex Called The Abrahamic Family House in Abu Dhabi," Dezeen, September 26, 2019.

denunciation within the region. Granted, it is important to note that Israel's similar relations with the other Gulf states account for some of the silence in the region, but this growing acceptance of Israel within the Arab world and unlikelihood that criticism and punishment would be a consequence of a formal agreement were significant impacts on the timing of the Accords. In effect, the TSR was a crucial normalization strategy used by both states to officially resolve their conflict and eventually capitalize on the benefits of normal relations, and the apogee of this tacit cooperation reached in 2020 substantiates the approximate timing of the Abraham Accords in August 2020. Consequently, the high level of cooperation within the TSR by the summer of 2020 put the UAE and Israel on the verge of official normalization, though the following three factors were instrumental in pushing Israel and the UAE to pursue a formal agreement.

2. The Three Factors

The convergence of three conditions enabled the inception of the Abraham Accords in August 2020: changes in the security environment, America's role as a mediator and strategic ally, and the opportunity of annexation to circumvent the Palestinian issue.

1. The Security Landscape

Although Iran's relationship with the UAE is less hostile than that of with Israel, the increasing threat of the UAE's neighbor across the Gulf is sizable enough to warrant such a strategic move with Israel. After all, much of the UAE's strategy and doctrine stems from the security interests of the GCC, which, since its establishment in 1981, has worked to counterbalance the belligerent Iranian regime.[182] Today, the UAE and Iran continue to compete

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[182] Hijab Shah and Melissa Dalton, "Evolving UAE Military and Foreign Security Cooperation: Path Toward Military Professionalism," Carnegie Middle East Center, January 12, 2021.

for hegemony and power in the region, and this tension has been augmented by Emirati military collaboration with Saudi Arabia, especially during the conflict in Yemen.[183] Further, the decades-long territorial dispute between the UAE and Iran over Abu Masa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb remains a significant source of friction between the two states, as the control of these islands proffers strategic control of maritime traffic in the Gulf, with approximately forty percent of global oil production passing through the Strait of Hormuz each day.[184] However, Iran is a direct security threat with its entire ballistic and cruise missile arsenal within striking range of the UAE and its strategic assets, as well as its role as an active proliferator and supplier to proxy groups in the region.[185] And although the UAE became the first Arab nation to open a nuclear power plant in August 2020, the UAE remains watchful of Iran's nuclear proliferation activities, especially with Iranian's increasing defiance of the disintegrating 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).[186]

Israel, on the other hand, faces a much more antagonistic and less amenable adversary with Iran. Remarkably, Iran initially shared strategic and cordial relations with Israel and became the second Muslim country to recognize Israel in 1950.[187] Yet, these relations quickly deteriorated with the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and installation of a new oppressive, theocratic regime led by Ayatollah Khomeini, who promptly embraced the Palestinian cause, denounced Israel as the "Little Satan," and severed relations with Israel three weeks later.[188] Despite instances of cooperation during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, Iran has remained committed to

[183] *Ibid*; Danny Citrinowicz, "Israel and the UAE on Iran: Shared Foe, Different Perspectives," The Washington Institute, September 1, 2020.

[184] Raúl Redondo, "Iran Warns UAE over Disputed Islands near Strait of Hormuz," Atalayar, October 6, 2020.

[185] Missile Threat, "Missiles of Iran," Missile Threat: CSIS Missile Defense Project (Center for Strategic and International Studies), accessed March 7, 2021.

[186] Vivian Yee, "U.A.E. Becomes First Arab Nation to Open a Nuclear Power Plant," *The New York Times*, August 1, 2020.

[187] Marc Daou, "Iran and Israel: A History of the World's Best Enmity," France 24, May 11, 2018.

[188] Garrett Nada, "Iran's Confrontation with Israel over Four Decades," The Iran Primer, January 21, 2020.

the destruction of Israel, brandishing in 2019 their "capacity to destroy the impostor Zionist regime" and that this endeavor is now an "achievable goal."[189] In the words of analyst Ali Vaez, the Iranian-Israeli conflict has become "a screw that only turns in one direction, getting tenser and tenser over time," and by 2019 both states have made explicit remarks about their defense capabilities and military preparedness with the possibility of direct conflict.[190] In particular, the JCPOA has remained a predominant source of tension between Israel and Iran, especially with recent efforts by Iran to expand its nuclear program. While Israel prefers a confrontational approach of political pressure, economic sanctions, and the use of force to address Iran's proliferation, the UAE opts for limited pressure and diplomacy to manage this critical threat.[191]

Meanwhile, Israeli and Emirati security interests also overlap in regards to containing Iran's entrenchment and countering Iran's proxy groups in the region. Over the last five years, Iran has maintained the 'balance of effective force'—capabilities most readily deployable with the largest advantage in an actual conflict—due to its unique capacity to fight through third parties in the region.[192] Throughout the past four decades, Iran has supported its partners and proxies in all of Israel's major military conflicts, supplying personnel, materiel, and money to three of Israel's borders—Lebanon, Syria, and the Palestinian territories.[193] Not only did Iran directly develop Hezbollah as an anti-Israel, pro-Iran militant group in the 1980s that has since remained a constant threat to Israel, but Iran also supports Hamas in Gaza and the Houthis in

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[189] "Iran Guards Chief: Destroying Israel Now Not a Dream but an 'Achievable Goal'," The Times of Israel, September 30, 2019.

[190] Tom Allinson, "Israel-Iran Conflict to Be Major Middle East Issue in 2020," Deutsche Welle, January 2, 2020.

[191] Danny Citrinowicz, "Israel and the UAE on Iran: Shared Foe, Different Perspectives," The Washington Institute, September 1, 2020.

[192] John Raine, "Iran, Its Partners, and the Balance of Effective Force," War on the Rocks, March 18, 2020.

[193] Garrett Nada, "Iran's Confrontation with Israel over Four Decades," The Iran Primer, January 21, 2020.

Yemen—all of which the UAE condemns or actively fights against.[194] The UAE's central efforts to counter the extremism of the Muslim Brotherhood, Al Qaeda, and ISIS also align with the strategic interests of Israel, who remains an enemy of these terrorist groups.[195] Another significant source of shared security concern is Turkey, which—with its increasingly revisionist and expansionist policies throughout the region—continues to pursue aggressive and coercive measures against the UAE and Israel alike.[196]

Several key events leading up to the Abraham Accords in August 2020 exacerbated regional tensions, thus providing a stronger impetus for the strategic alignment of Israel and the UAE, as well as the formation of an axis against Iran in the region. In fact, the year 2020 began with the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani—the most powerful military commander leading Iran's Quds Force—which was carried out by a US air strike and supported with valuable Israeli intelligence, the public knowledge of which prompted threats of targeting Tel Aviv and Haifa to avenge Soleimani's death.[197] Friction continued to increase as Iran sustained the expansion of its nuclear proliferation efforts throughout the year, launching its first military satellite on April 22.[198] Another US-Israel collaboration in the killing of al-Qaeda's 'Number 2' Abu Mohammed al-Masri in Iran on August 7—just six days before the Abraham Accords were

[194] *Ibid*; John Raine, "Iran, Its Partners, and the Balance of Effective Force," War on the Rocks, March 18, 2020; "UAE Counterterrorism," Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, accessed March 7, 2021; Sarah Chemla, "UAE Lawmaker: 'Hamas and the PA Are Both Corrupt and Murderers'," The Jerusalem Post, October 27, 2020.
[195] Hijab Shah and Melissa Dalton, "Evolving UAE Military and Foreign Security Cooperation: Path Toward Military Professionalism," Carnegie Middle East Center, January 12, 2021; Seth J. Frantzman, "Al-Qaeda's Threat to Jews Spurred Operation to Kill Top Leader - Report," The Jerusalem Post, November 16, 2020; Graham Allison, "Why ISIS Fears Israel," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, August 8, 2016; "Brotherhood of Hate: Muslim Brotherhood's Hatred for Jews and Israel Flourishes in 'New' Egypt," Anti-Defamation League, November 19, 2012.
[196] Ebtesam al-Ketbi, "Emirati-Israeli Peace Agreement: Could It Be a Game-Changer?" Emirates Policy Center, September 24, 2020; Henri J. Barkey, "The UAE-Israel Agreement Isn't Only About Iran. There's Also Turkey.," Council on Foreign Relations (Council on Foreign Relations, September 21, 2020).
[197] Seth J. Frantzman, "Al-Qaeda's Threat to Jews Spurred Operation to Kill Top Leader - Report," The Jerusalem Post, November 16, 2020.
[198] "U.S. Relations With Iran, 1953–2020," Council on Foreign Relations (Council on Foreign Relations).

announced—exemplifies the augmenting tension in the region as well as the anti-Iran camp's

increasing momentum to take substantial action against Iran and its proxies.[199] The US'

"maximum pressure" foreign policy strategy against Iran throughout 2020 largely aggravated

this regional hostility, much due to the Trump administration's extensive campaign of sanctions

imposed on Iranian industries, military, arms suppliers, firms, media outlets, and top officials.[200]

As analysts Tova Norlen and Tamir Sinai emphasize, "Iran's continued support for

regional proxies, radical groups, and terrorism, and its return to nuclear activities after the U.S.

withdrew from the treaty, may be the most powerful factor that unites the new-found friends."[201]

Not only does this security cooperation enable overt collaboration in valuable military and

intelligence technology, but the agreement also facilitates a consequential shift in the regional

balance of power by solidifying an anti-Iran axis.[202] Again, the Accords are not an official

alliance with an explicit military commitment. However, this partnership effectively increases

Israel's presence and military capabilities in Iran's vicinity, and the President of the Emirates

Policy Center has gone so far as to declare that "the strategic implications of the agreement is

nothing short of a game-changer."[203] Although the UAE emphasizes the potential of the Accords

to engender peace, stability, and moderation in the region—even envisioning itself as a counselor

to Turkey and a mediator between Iran and Israel—UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

Anwar Gargash conveyed that the agreement was a strategic decision that will improve the

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[199] Matthew Lee and James LaPorta, "US, Israel Worked Together to Track and Kill Al-Qaida No. 2," AP NEWS (Associated Press, November 15, 2020).
[200] "U.S. Sanctions on Iran in 2020," The Iran Primer (The United States Institute of Peace, December 16, 2020).
[201] Tamir Sinai and Tova Norlen, "The Abraham Accords – Paradigm Shift or Realpolitik?" (George C. Marshall European Center For Security Studies, October 2020).
[202] *Ibid*.
[203] Ali Alfoneh, "Iran Reacts Angrily to the UAE-Israel Landmark Agreement," Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, August 17, 2020.

UAE's defense posture in the region.[204] Ultimately, the escalation of regional tensions and amplification of security concerns transformed the strategic landscape in 2020 into one conducive to the official normalization of relations between the UAE and Israel so that the two states could effectively defend against Iranian, Turkish, and proxy threats throughout the region.

2. The United States as a Broker and Valuable Ally

When President Trump revealed his administration's "Deal of the Century" aiming to conclusively resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, many were skeptical not only about the content of the plan but also about the efficacy of the United States as a mediator of a peace agreement.[205] In fact, veteran Middle East peace negotiator Aaron David Miller described the plan as "a framework that may well have hung a closed-for-the-season sign both on a viable peace process and America's credibility as a fair and effective broker."[206] Much of this apprehension emanated from the perception that President Trump and senior advisor Jared Kushner were turning a long-awaited resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into "the ultimate product of pro-Israel lawyering at its best," abandoning their responsibility as a credible third party mediator to broker on behalf of both sides.[207] In all three past instances of success in terms of negotiating peace for Israel, the US successfully represented both parties' interests.[208]

However, despite this lack of faith in America's capacity to mediate peace in the Middle East, the Trump administration demonstrated its diplomatic capabilities in brokering the

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[204] Ebtesam al-Ketbi, "Emirati-Israeli Peace Agreement: Could It Be a Game-Changer?" Emirates Policy Center, September 24, 2020; Hijab Shah and Melissa Dalton, "Evolving UAE Military and Foreign Security Cooperation: Path Toward Military Professionalism," Carnegie Middle East Center, January 12, 2021.

[205] Lior Lehrs, "Is Trump's 'Deal of the Century' Really a Peace Plan?" Middle East Institute, May 20, 2019.

[206] Aaron David Miller, "I'm a Veteran Middle East Peace Negotiator. Trump's Plan Is the Most Dangerous I've Ever Seen.," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 27, 2020.

[207] *Ibid.*

[208] *Ibid.*

Abraham Accords between Israel and the UAE, as well as subsequent states looking to capitalize

on normalized relations with Israel. The success of the US' mediation efforts can largely be

linked to the abandonment of solely "pro-Israel brokering."[209] As Ambassador Al Otaiba

revealed, talks about normalization first began when the UAE approached the US about their

discontent surrounding Israel's proposal for annexation, and his publication of an op-ed to probe

the response to the idea of normalization effectively instigated the negotiation process.[210] As

opposed to the prospect of strictly pro-Israeli mediation of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, Al

Otaiba reported "an incredible amount of trust" with the transactional Trump administration,

saying that in the four weeks before the announcement, he conversed more with officials like

Kushner and Avi Berkowitz than he did with his own family.[211] Although Al Otaiba credits the

US with much of the success of the Accords, prominent Emirati intellectual Dr. Abdulkhaleq

Abdulla contends that the US did not pressure the UAE nor lead the decision to normalize

relations, asserting that the UAE negotiated the agreement on its own terms and has the freedom

to withdraw whenever it pleases.[212]

Regardless of the degree to which the US played an active role in the negotiations, the

US not only substantiated their even-handed mediation skills—as demonstrated in their

subsequent deals between Arab nations and Israel—but also reaffirmed its role as a crucial player

in the Middle East and indispensable ally for both Israel and the UAE. In her paper on relations

between Israel and the Gulf states, Elisheva Rosman-Stollman argues that these actors gravitate

towards a balancing strategy by "turning to the United States as a hegemonic yet unthreatening

[209] *Ibid*.
[210] Jacob Magid, "UAE Envoy: We're Not a Democracy, but Public Support Allowed for Normalization," The Times of Israel, September 29, 2020.
[211] *Ibid*.
[212] Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, *Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs* (Harvard Kennedy School, October 8, 2020).

power and using Israel as a way of currying favour with the hegemony," which incentivized the

Gulf states to pursue normalization.[213] It is important to note that her assertion that Israel alone

could not be an effective ally to the Gulf states was published in 2004; however, the idea that the

Gulf states view friendly relations with Israel as a means to grow closer to the US remains a

noteworthy dimension of US influence in the Middle East. Although the US has been slowly

reducing its direct activity in the region, the Accords bolster its key allies and ensure their future

support, "[providing] a lifeline for sustained U.S. influence in the region [and] strengthening

engagement both strategically and economically."[214] Though Israel's longstanding dependence

on the US as an ally and protector is well-known—along with Trump and Netanyahu's close

relationship—the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs' description of the US as the UAE's

"most important strategic ally" further signifies both countries' continued reliance on American

support and strength in the region.[215]

One area in which the US played an important role in facilitating the Abraham Accords is

the selling of F-35 jets to the UAE. Notably, the US has a tradition of trading military supplies

for peace with Israel, with Egypt acquiring the second largest military aid package in the Middle

East in 1979 and Jordan securing debt relief and the F-16 fighter aircraft in 1994.[216] In addition

to 18 MQ-9 Reaper drones, the US also agreed to sell 50 F-35 joint strike fighter aircraft to the

UAE.[217] Not only does the US profit from this new market for military equipment—especially

[213] Elisheva Rosman-Stollman, "Balancing Acts: The Gulf States and Israel," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 4 (2004): 185-208.

[214] Hijab Shah and Melissa Dalton, "Evolving UAE Military and Foreign Security Cooperation: Path Toward Military Professionalism," Carnegie Middle East Center, January 12, 2021.

[215] Anwar Gargash, "UAE's Anwar Gargash Says Israeli Pact Is 'Sovereign' Decision," interview by Manus Cranny, *Bloomberg Markets*, August 14, 2020.

[216] Barbara A. Leaf and Dana Stroul, "The F-35 Triangle: America, Israel, the United Arab Emirates," War on the Rocks, September 15, 2020.

[217] Valerie Insinna, "Just Hours before Biden's Inauguration, the UAE and US Come to a Deal on F-35 Sales," Defense News, January 20, 2021.

with Chinese efforts to increase its influence in the region through commerce—but the US was also able to "transform the region's strategic landscape," in the words of then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who described the weapons deal as "recognition of our deepening relationship and the need for advanced defense capabilities to deter and defend itself against heightened threats from Iran."[218] While Israelis voiced their concern and disapproval of America's circumvention of the Israel Qualitative Military Edge Act of 2017, which bans high-technology weapons sales to other Middle Eastern countries that would compromise Israel's ability to defend itself, this criticism has largely subsided, perhaps indicating greater trust and defense cooperation between the new partners.[219] And although President Joe Biden recently froze the $23 billion sale of F-35s and MQ-9s to the UAE, Ambassador Al Otaiba expressed his lack of concern over the freeze, calling it a "routine, checking the box exercise."[220]

Another demonstration of the US' dominant role in the region—as well as the UAE and Israel's persisting dependence on the US as an ally—is America's efforts to curb Iranian nuclear proliferation. Along with his 2018 withdrawal from the JCPOA, former President Trump pursued a strategy of "maximum pressure" against Iran, including burgeoning sanctions, targeted assassinations, and hostile rhetoric.[221] While this aggressive approach to Iran was supported by both the UAE and Israel—common ground which might have contributed to the relative ease with which the three leaders were able to finalize the Accords—the US continues to play a dominant role in the future of the JCPOA and Iran's nuclear proliferation, regardless of President

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[218] Aaron Mehta, "US State Dept. Approves UAE's Purchase of F-35 Jets, MQ-9 Drones," Defense News, November 10, 2020.

[219] Hijab Shah and Melissa Dalton, "Evolving UAE Military and Foreign Security Cooperation: Path Toward Military Professionalism," Carnegie Middle East Center, January 12, 2021.

[220] Jacob Magid, "UAE Ambassador: 'Abraham Accords Were about Preventing Annexation'," The Times of Israel, February 2, 2021.

[221] Meridith McGraw, "Trump's 'Maximum Pressure' Peaks Just before Election," POLITICO, September 19, 2020.

Biden's preference for more diplomatic measures.[222] With Iran's noncompliance of central provisions in the 2015 agreement and recent bold moves towards nuclear proliferation—along with Biden's refusal to renege on its sanctions—Iran and the US are struggling to converge on mutual terms under which nuclear talks can resume.[223] The November 2020 assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, top Iranian nuclear scientist, has further increased tensions between the US and Iran, and the UAE and Israel will need to maintain close and steady relations with the Biden administration to ensure that the prospects of Iranian nuclear proliferation subside and vanish.[224]

While the extent of the active involvement of the US in the negotiations is uncertain, the US exemplifies its indispensable role as a broker and a regional actor, both in its support of and imposition of its interests on the UAE and Israel. The desire for the UAE to acquire F-35 jets and other advanced weapons technology—as well as the convergence of concern over the increasing nuclear threat of Iran—created a dynamic between the three states conducive to a successful mediation on the part of the United States. The UAE and Israel's historic reliance on the US and need for America's strategic partnership and support not only promoted the increasing normalization of their relations, but this asymmetry also played a contributing role in the Accords themselves. Not only did the US' participation in the Accords confer strategic advantages to the UAE and Israel and bring them into a closer partnership with the US, but the demonstration of the US as a successful broker also enabled a "domino effect" to ensue, with

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[222] Abigail Ng, "Middle East Leaders Praise Trump's 'Maximum Pressure' Campaign on Iran as Biden Takes Office," CNBC, January 22, 2021.

[223] Najmeh Bozorgmehr, "Iran Ready to Resume Nuclear Talks If US Lifts Sanctions within a Year," Financial Times, March 5, 2021.

[224] Farzan Sabet, "How the Assassination of an Iranian Scientist Could Affect Nuclear Negotiations with Iran," The Washington Post, December 11, 2020.

subsequent deals with Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco further strengthening the UAE and Israel's strategic position in the region.[225]

3. Annexation and the Palestinian Question

Prior to the Abraham Accords, Arab normalization with Israel was assumed to be preconditioned on a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Not only was this obstacle widely discussed in the academic discourse of normalization, but this prerequisite was also the only factor accentuated in a presumed sequence of normalization. After all, there are countless regional commitments to this precondition, especially the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and recurrent affirmations by state leaders and governments of their allegiance to the creation of a Palestinian state.[226] In fact, just three months before the announcement of UAE-Israel normalization, Middle East analyst Aaron David Miller expressed his doubts over full normalization between Israel and the Gulf states due to the latter's attachment to the Palestinian cause, erroneously concluding that "then again [peace] was never in the cards."[227] The fact that the UAE fully normalized relations with Israel—especially in the absence of the prerequisite Palestinian peace deal and plurilateral normalization effort—surprised many. The dominance of Pan-Arab support of the Palestinian cause in the region, as well as the power of path dependence over Arab opposition to normalization in absence of a settlement with the Palestinians, were both strong forces that impeded official Arab-Israeli normalization for decades.

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[225] Hijab Shah and Melissa Dalton, "Evolving UAE Military and Foreign Security Cooperation: Path Toward Military Professionalism," Carnegie Middle East Center, January 12, 2021.

[226] "Saudi Remains Committed to Arab Peace Initiative for Israel Peace, Foreign Minister Says," Reuters, August 19, 2020.

[227] Aaron David Miller, "Opinion: How Israel and the Arab World Are Making Peace Without a Peace Deal," POLITICO (POLITICO, May 28, 2020).

However, an independent Palestinian state was also once believed to be the precondition for any sort of communication or interaction between Israel and the Arab world, which evidently occurred, nonetheless. As Jones and Guzansky explain in their book,

> "Where once a resolution to the question of Palestine was considered a prerequisite for any dialogue between Israel and its Arab neighbours, the realities of the contemporary Middle East created an environment in which pragmatism born of strategic need pushed the issue of Palestine to the margins."[228]

Therefore, if the shifting strategic realities and needs of the region were great enough to override such an established obstacle to any dialogue between Israel and the Gulf states, why was it assumed that could not be done again? In reflecting on the Accords, Miller admits that experts—including himself—were mistaken in their previous assertions about Arab-Israeli progress because of their "old assumptions."[229] Just as the shift in regional interests facilitated initial contacts between Israel and the Gulf states amid vocal loyalty to the Palestinian cause, this breakthrough in 2020 was possible because regional priorities have changed. For one, Emirati and Israeli interests have been increasingly converging—including a shared fear of Iran and its proxy groups and the benefits of growing economic and technological ties. In addition, amid a downward trend of Pan-Arab and Pan-Islamic unity, the Gulf states are less concerned with the stagnating Palestinian cause than they are with their own domestic and security issues.[230]

However, the fact that significant regional shifts demoted the Palestinian cause as a fundamental obstacle to Arab-Israeli normalization does not deny the Israeli-Palestinian conflict its influence and leverage in these normalization efforts. Yet, rather than an effective impediment

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[228] Clive Jones and Yoel Guzansky, *Fraternal Enemies: Israel and the Gulf Monarchies* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 5.

[229] Aaron David Miller, "Arab-Israeli Progress Seemed Impossible. That's Because of Old Assumptions.," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 23, 2020.

[230] Hillel Frisch, "The Israel-UAE Agreement's Greatest Achievement: Little Arab Protest," Edited by Efraim Karsh, *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* No. 180 (September 2020): 6-8.

to normalization, the Palestinians became simply another interest for both sides to consider. In fact, Israel's efforts to annex parts of Palestinian territory served as an excellent opportunity for the UAE and Israel to pursue a "quid-pro-quo" agreement that satisfied both parties.[231]

Anwar Gargash, the UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, directly explained the timing of the Accords, admitting that while there will never be a "perfect moment" for normalization with Israel, waiting for such ideal circumstances would mean "standing still and letting developments sort of bypass you," which he says "has been the case with the Palestinian issue historically."[232] In a separate interview, Gargash elaborated on the timing and conditions under which the UAE decided to pursue official normalization with Israel, indicating that formal relations were imminent, regardless of annexation:

> "Our calculations were very, very clear. Our calculations were, on the one hand, how can we do something while at the same time achieving something with regards to stopping annexation. And I think this was very successful by rationally and realistically coming across and saying, 'we are formalizing a situation that is developing. This is where the relationship is going to go next year or the year after. Why don't we do it now?' And if we do it now, we can actually get something in return to support and help the region. And I think we just achieved that."[233]

Gargash further explained that the idea for a "win-win solution" emerged from universal concern expressed in Arab League meetings over annexation threatening to sabotage any prospects for a two-state solution.[234] Ambassador Al Otaiba echoed this narrative that the Accords were pursued

[231] Jacob Magid, "UAE Envoy: We're Not a Democracy, but Public Support Allowed for Normalization," The Times of Israel, September 29, 2020.

[232] Abigail Ng, "Middle East Leaders Praise Trump's 'Maximum Pressure' Campaign on Iran as Biden Takes Office," CNBC, January 22, 2021.

[233] Anwar Gargash, "UAE's Anwar Gargash Says Israeli Pact Is 'Sovereign' Decision," interview by Manus Cranny, *Bloomberg Markets*, August 14, 2020.

[234] Abigail Ng, "Middle East Leaders Praise Trump's 'Maximum Pressure' Campaign on Iran as Biden Takes Office," CNBC, January 22, 2021.

as a measure to prevent annexation, proclaiming that "the beauty of the Abraham Accords is its simplicity: No annexation for normalization."[235]

Although the UAE is firmly promoting this account of the Abraham Accords, it must be noted that not everyone accepts this explanation. Some view the deal as "cold, hard political opportunism taken at the expense of Palestinians," asserting that the UAE may have attempted to represent itself as "Palestine's Arab savior . . . but the reality is that Palestinians and their rights had nothing to do with it."[236] As opposed to this perception of a blatant betrayal of the Palestinian cause, others simply view annexation as a fortuitous opportunity that allowed Kushner to "[generate] an asset out of nothing" and Netanyahu to find a way out of his promise of annexation that lacked approval from the Trump administration.[237] In this sense, many view the Palestinian issue as a "fictitious bargaining chip" that was fabricated solely to facilitate the Accords.[238] Albeit in support for annexation, Professor Shmuel Trigano scrutinizes the reason for publicizing the July 1 annexation, just for Netanyahu to ultimately suspend the plan:

> On this point, it was disappointing to hear the PM announce the coming extension of Israeli law in an almost obsessive way, fail to implement it, and then cease entirely to discuss it. Why announce it if there was no intention of putting it in place? All he achieved was to unite the world in opposition to Israel for no purpose.[239]

Although a conspiracy that the annexation plan was simply constructed to serve as leverage to attain normalization is unsubstantiated, the conception that annexation was simply used as a bargaining chip in negotiations—as expressed by the Emiratis—is widely accepted.

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[235] Jacob Magid, "UAE Envoy: We're Not a Democracy, but Public Support Allowed for Normalization," The Times of Israel, September 29, 2020.

[236] Zaha Hassan, "The Israel-UAE Accord Is a Mere Sideshow," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 19, 2020.

[237] Tamir Sinai and Tova Norlen, "The Abraham Accords – Paradigm Shift or Realpolitik?" (George C. Marshall European Center For Security Studies, October 2020).

[238] *Ibid*.

[239] Shmuel Trigano, "The Abraham Accords: Contrasting Reflections," March 2021.

Despite disapproval by Arab governments, officials, and groups in the region—which have been innocuous compared to the violent and severe reactions in 1979 and 1994—the UAE has confronted this criticism with affirmation of its unequivocal support for the Palestinians.[240] Not only does the UAE predicate the entire agreement on the elimination of annexation and the protection of the Palestinian people, but the UAE also portrays the Accords as a strategic move to assume a more involved and forceful role in advocating for the Palestinian cause.[241] Further, some are peculiarly optimistic that the Accords could paradoxically facilitate a peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. While many rebuffed the possibility of Netanyahu's suggestion in 2017 that "normalisation with Arab states could help pave the way for peace with the Palestinians," this new political reality and regional environment have effectively eliminated the Palestinians' veto power on Arab engagement with Israel.[242] By reversing the preconceived sequence for normalization and peace in the Middle East and providing the UAE a potential strategic lobbying role on behalf of the Palestinians, the Accords might even have the potential to be the first step to facilitating the long awaited solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Although the 2002 API has failed to endure as the framework through which Arab nations formalize relations with Israel, the Palestinian issue has remained a central factor in negotiations for normalization. In fact, the UAE believes that the Palestinians are undoubtedly the primary element of the agreement. However, whether the UAE genuinely wanted to protect the Palestinians and their cause at any cost or simply wanted to reap the strategic and economic benefits of formal cooperation with Israel is largely irrelevant when analyzing the role of

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[240] Akhbar Alsaa, "Editorial: UAE's Position on the Palestinian Cause Is Unequivocal," Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, September 12, 2020.
[241] Ebtesam al-Ketbi, "Emirati-Israeli Peace Agreement: Could It Be a Game-Changer?" Emirates Policy Center, September 24, 2020.
[242] Binyamin Netanyahu, "Innovation Nation: The World in 2018," *The Economist*, December 2017.

annexation in facilitating the Abraham Accords. With annexation scheduled to commence on July 1, it is evident that annexation was the perfect and 'ripe' opportunity for all three parties involved to secure a mutually advantageous normalization agreement, regardless of their true intentions and attitudes towards annexation and the Palestinian cause.[243] Ultimately, the timing of the Accords was largely contingent on the incidence of annexation scheduled a month earlier, which served as a chance for the all three states to act upon the strategic changes and security developments in the region that warranted a formal normalization agreement between the UAE and Israel. As Ambassador Al Otaiba explained, perhaps more sincerely than it may initially seem, "the truth is that the Abraham Accords were about preventing annexation. The reason it happened, the way it happened, at the time it happened was to prevent annexation."[244] Again, the genuine sentiments towards annexation are insignificant, for without annexation to serve as leverage, Anwar Gargash and the Gulf region would likely still be waiting for the "perfect moment" to officially normalize relations with Israel.[245]

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[243] "Explainer: Israel, Annexation and the West Bank," BBC News (BBC, June 25, 2020).

[244] Jacob Magid, "UAE Ambassador: 'Abraham Accords Were about Preventing Annexation'," The Times of Israel, February 2, 2021.

[245] Abigail Ng, "Middle East Leaders Praise Trump's 'Maximum Pressure' Campaign on Iran as Biden Takes Office," CNBC, January 22, 2021.

Conclusion

The announcement of the Abraham Accords came as a surprise to many, even to those who had a proper understanding of the decades of tacit cooperation between Israel and the UAE. In this sense, the Accords were unexpected because of the timing and conditions under which Arab normalization with Israel occurred, which defied the longstanding presumption of a comprehensive peace settlement with the Palestinians and a subsequent plurilateral agreement between Israel and the Arab League.

The Abraham Accords differed in many ways from its predecessors. As opposed to Israel's peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, the UAE was never in a state of war with Israel, and regional interests and public opinions have shifted considerably in recent years. Further, in contrast to its 'cold peace' with Egypt and Jordan, Israel's decades of informal relations with the UAE have aptly prepared the two states for an unprecedented 'warm peace.'

This potential for a 'warm peace' between the UAE and Israel emerged from a long process of normalization, which began with the mutual decision to pursue covert ties in the 1970s. As a conflict resolution strategy, normalization defies the presumed sequence for a peace settlement, as it can be used before, during, and after an agreement is reached. By aiming to improve bilateral relations through diplomatic, economic, security, and cultural connections, normalization is a tactic that ultimately builds trust, confidence, and respect between states. As demonstrated through communication theory and the theory of functionalism, these informal links effectively foster and promote cooperation between states through increased contact and a focus on mutual issues and interests. The characterization of UAE-Israel relations as a tacit security regime further explains the utility of this unofficial cooperation as a strategy of normalization to cultivate a mutually beneficial relationship between the UAE and Israel. I

ultimately apply the aforementioned theoretical concepts and empirical evidence to this framework and conclude that the TSR as a security and cooperation arrangement not only describes the pre-Accords collaboration between the UAE and Israel but also has the potential to serve as a normalization strategy to alter the cost-benefit balance for states pursuing a formal agreement.

This new theory to explain the timing and conditions under which the Abraham Accords transpired is twofold. First, I explore how the TSR between the UAE and Israel as a tactic of pre-Accords normalization laid the essential foundation for an agreement formalizing this tacit cooperation. Second, I describe how three fundamental factors converged as a perfect opportunity for the UAE and Israel to officially normalize relations in August 2020, including the changing security landscape, the role of the United States, and the Palestinian cause. While the increasing threat of Iran and the capacity of the US as a broker and valuable ally further advanced the momentum towards a normalization deal by increasing the benefits to enhanced cooperation, the exact timing of the agreement was a result of annexation. Regardless of the genuine intentions and attitudes towards Israel's proposed annexation of the West Bank, the issue was a ripe opportunity for the UAE, Israel, and the US to finally negotiate a normalization agreement, successfully subverting the sole obstacle to Arab normalization with Israel.

With several states following suit and normalizing relations with Israel—as well as the expectation of more to come—it is important to understand why and how the UAE and Israel decided to formalize their decades of tacit cooperation. Ultimately, along with a more threatening strategic environment and the asset of a valuable broker, the opportunity to use the one obstacle to normalization as a bargaining chip in negotiating the agreement effectively dictated the timing and conditions under which the Abraham Accords materialized.

Implications

In analyzing the timing and conditions under which the Abraham Accords transpired, I identify several theoretical and policy implications for my research.

First, this theory is consequential for the framework of a TSR. As my research has demonstrated, the TSR has the potential and utility of strategically enabling full normalization between two countries, as well as a network of countries. While Jones and Guzansky prematurely denied this capacity, my work on the Abraham Accords has indicated a need for a revised paradigm of a TSR. In addition, this thesis also evinces the value of applying communication theory and the functional approach to inter-state normalization efforts in the realm of foreign relations. Hence, these theories would benefit from further research on their intersection with the field of foreign policy. My research can also further the study of ripeness and path dependence in changing longstanding policy decisions, as this thesis clearly underscores the certain conditions under which policymakers chose to change policy as a result of the shifting cost-benefit balance. Within the study of normalization, this thesis has significant implications. By emphasizing normalization's role in conflict resolution before, during, and after a peace settlement, I advanced the theoretical discussion of normalization and conflict resolution.

Second, I argue that the framework of a tacit security regime can be utilized as an effective strategy of normalization by states who aspire for formal relations with one another. As demonstrated through the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco, pre-existing tacit cooperation provided a foundation for official normalization to occur. By establishing initial contacts in the area of mutual security interests and maintaining those as the focus around which other channels of cooperation can materialize, two states looking to someday formally normalize relations can pursue a tactic of developing a TSR, which allows states to circumvent political sensitivities that

might otherwise prevent such collaboration from manifesting. This strategy also effectively fosters respect, trust, and confidence between two states, allowing two countries to gradually improve relations and reap the benefits of cooperation prior to an official agreement normalizing relations, which increases the chances of a 'warm peace' to follow.

Third, my research has practical implications for the prospect of other Gulf states and Arab countries to formally normalize relations with Israel. While weaker states like Bahrain were able to use the UAE's normalization as an opportunity and justification to normalize relations with Israel, my framework has the potential to explain the possibility of larger states in more precarious situations to pursue an agreement with Israel. For instance, Saudi Arabia and Israel— who have pre-existing informal ties, mutual security interests, and close relations with the US— might be able to navigate this framework and determine an opportunity to use as leverage for peace negotiations. Even states like Oman and Tunisia have the capacity to use this framework to work towards official normalization with Israel. Depending on changes in the regional landscape, my theory may have additional benefits in analyzing future normalization. Ultimately, this thesis also has the potential to be useful in other cases of normalization efforts in the world.

Overall, I anticipate my explanation of the Abraham Accords to be relevant for studies of normalization, cooperation, and negotiation. In understanding the timing and conditions under which the UAE and Israel decided to normalize relations, one can further recognize the importance of normalization in the field of conflict resolution, especially in regards to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Although the Middle East is an everchanging regional landscape and home to several prolonged conflicts, I expect my research on the Abraham Accords and normalization to highlight the potential for cooperation and peace in the region—especially with the prospect of the Abraham Accords inaugurating a new era for the Middle East and Arab-Israeli relations.

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