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The Abraham Accords and the Transformation of Middle Eastern Geopolitics: Motivations, Opportunities, and Challenges

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the Abraham Accords as a transformative diplomatic initiative aimed at normalizing relations between Israel and several Arab states, thereby reconfiguring the geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East. It explores the motives of the signatory states including the US behind the Abraham Accords and analyzes the emerging opportunities, challenges, and the regional implications. Applying the theoretical framework of neo-liberal institutionalism, the study explores how cooperation is possible among states despite long-standing political disputes. A qualitative research methodology is employed to attain comprehensive and diverse insights regarding the impact of the Abraham Accords on the Middle Eastern region. Findings suggest that Abraham Accords have the potential to reshape historic tensions, diversify foreign policy strategies for Arab nations, and alter the geo-political dynamics in the Middle East. The long-term success of these Accords however, depends on the institutionalization of the normalization process and resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Key Words: *Abraham Accords, Middle East, Opportunities and Challenges.*

Introduction

The Middle East has long been plagued by prolonged conflicts and entrenched divisions. Religious and ideological fault lines, conflicting interests of various groups and regional states complicated by the involvement of powers define the region's complex geo-political environment.¹ The aftermath of the Arab Spring led to a series of political, economic, and social changes in the Middle Eastern and MENA regions. Civil wars in Libya, Syria, and Yemen are emblematic of the instability in this period. In the post Arab-Spring era, Iran was perceived as a major concern by the MENA

¹ Massimiliano Fiore, "The Abraham Accords and the Palestinian Issue," *E-International Relations* (2020).

countries due to its growing influence and assertive foreign policy. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) considered Iran a threat to its strategic interests due to claims over three strategically located islands. The UAE considered these territorial claims, Iranian regional ambitions, sectarian issues, and its nuclear ambitions matters as serious threats to its territorial sovereignty.² Likewise, Morocco viewed Iran's expanding influence in the North-African region with skepticism and concern. The latter's support of the Polisario Front (an independence movement for Western Sahara) became the major source of contention between the two countries. Resultantly, Morocco decided to distance itself from Iran.³

Sudan's concerns vis-à-vis Iran emanated primarily due to its growing involvement in the country's internal affairs. Iran's support of militant groups and its revolutionary ideology clashed with the Sudanese Sunni affiliations and bilateral relations were downgraded.⁴ Bahrain too viewed Iran with suspicion owing to a history of tense relations, sectarian differences, and broader security concerns. The population in Bahrain is predominantly Sunni which is ruled over by a Shia government. Iran's support for the Shia factions in the country was viewed critically as an attempt to destabilize Bahrain's government.⁵ In addition to the Muslim countries, Israel perceived Iran's nuclear program as a direct challenge to its existential security. Tehran's support of anti-Israel militias such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Islamic Jihad not only led to bilateral acrimony but also contributed to the broader regional anxieties.⁶

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the regional order witnessed a power vacuum which allowed Iran to step up and increase its influence in the Middle East.⁷ Iran's expanding footprint in the regional dynamics contributed to rising apprehensions and concerns. Almost concurrently, as the US interest in the region began to wane on account of a refocus that shifted US strategic priorities towards the Asia Pacific, China and Russia entered a period of greater engagement with the Middle Eastern region. Owing to these developments the US recalibrated its strategy for the Middle East; one that would enable a greater role for Israel in the region's dynamics enabling Israel to work as the US proxy in the Middle East and safeguard US interests.⁸ Towards achieving this end, the Trump administration facilitated the Abraham Accords in September 2020.⁹ The Abraham Accords were described as a first step toward increased diplomatic, trade, security, and economic cooperation between Israel and several states including the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. In the general declaration of the Abraham Accords (AA), the following statement sums up the vision shared by the signatory states:

"We pursue a vision of peace, security, and prosperity in the Middle East and worldwide. In this

² Shahram Chubin, "Iran and the Arab Spring: Ascendancy Frustrated," *Gulf Research Centre* (2012).

³ Imad Salamey, "Post-Arab Spring: Changes and Challenges," *Third World Quarterly* vol 36, no. 1 (2015): 111-129.

⁴ Bulent Aras and Richard Falk, "Authoritarian Geopolitics of Survival in the Arab Spring," *Third World Quarterly* vol 36, no. 2 (2015): 322-336.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Banu Eligur, "The Arab Spring: Implications for US-Israeli Relations," *Israeli Affairs* vol 20, no. 3 (2014): 281-301.

⁷ Ahmad Dahshan, "China and Russia in the Middle East: Seeking Integration under a Common goal," *The Wilson Centre's Middle East Program* (2024): 57-68.

⁸ Motasem A Dalloul, "Biden proved that Israel is a Proxy in the Middle East," *Middle East Monitor* (2022).

⁹ F. Gause, "The Price of Order Settling for Less in the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs* 101, no. 2 (2022): 10-21.

spirit, we warmly welcome and are encouraged by the progress already made in establishing diplomatic relations between Israel and its neighbors in the region under the principles of the Abraham Accords".¹⁰

This paper aims to arrive at an understanding of the motivations and objectives of the signatory states and the US in context of the Abraham Accords. It sheds light on how these accords are reshaping relations among the signatory states and analyzes the opportunities and challenges faced by participating actors in exploring new avenues of cooperation and the ensuing impacts of these developments on the broader regional dynamics.

Conceptual Framework

The theory of neo-liberal institutionalism is applied for analyzing the role of the Abraham Accords (AA) in redefining Middle Eastern relations. It focuses on the role of states in facilitating and negotiating treaties for mutual gains. It argues that in an anarchic international system, states normalize their relations for economic, security, and political interests. It states that regimes foster peace, stability, and cooperation in the anarchic international system. Regimes play a critical role in reducing uncertainty and promoting cooperation among states.¹¹ The Abraham Accords act as a framework for reducing conflict, mistrust, and uncertainty among the Middle Eastern states. This peace agreement opens a number of opportunities in different sectors including trade, tourism, defense, technology, etc. The proponents of neo-liberal institutionalism are of the view that states cooperate for the mutual gains and the signatory states are benefitting from these security-related exercises and agreements, economic growth, and geopolitical influences. In this way, a united front is created by Israel and the UAE for strengthening regional alliances against the Iranian influence. These kind of mutual benefits result in an enhanced security and greater Middle Eastern stability by making a common front against regional threats.

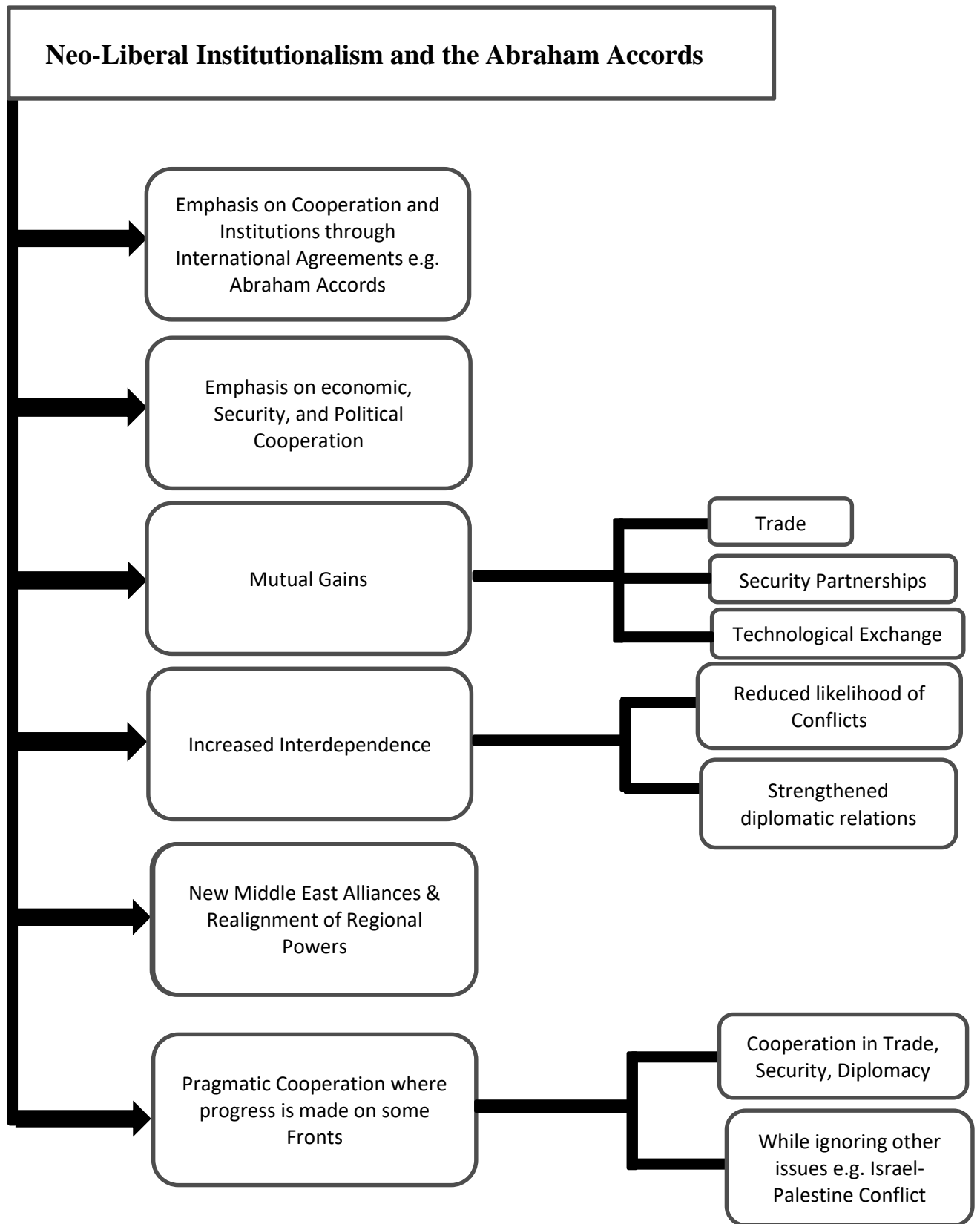
The theory of neo-liberal institutionalism also considers the challenges that come along with cooperation by acknowledging the fact that seeking and achieving cooperation will be difficult in the areas where there are higher levels of uncertainties and mistrust, domestic political issues, or divergent interests of the parties involved. The domestic concerns and regional rivalries are posing serious challenges to the Abraham Accords. The states in which public opinion is opposed to the Israeli encroachments and where people are supporting the Palestinian concerns are hesitant to become a part of this peace agreement. The establishment of broader regional peace and stability is impossible without the resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict as there is a limited involvement of the Palestinian authorities.

The theory of neo-liberal institutionalism focuses on the argument that cooperation can be achieved among states even if there is absence of the full resolution of the historical unresolved conflicts. States can promote cooperation for mutual benefits. In the case of the Abraham Accords, states are cooperating in various areas without addressing the broader historical unresolved regional conflicts. The theory argues that these Accords and agreements are an example of pragmatic approach where the signatory states cooperate in some fronts such as trade, security, economy, and diplomacy even though the other key areas for example the Israel-Palestine conflict remains unaddressed.

¹⁰ The US Department of State, "The Abraham Accords Declaration," 2020.

¹¹ Arthur A. Stein, "Neo-Liberal Institutionalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS*, 201-221. (UK: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Conceptual Framework Diagram



Research Methodology

The paper is qualitative in nature and the case study method is used as a research design. A case study is the detailed examination of an event to understand the dynamics and outcomes of the case under investigation. Keith F Punch defines case study as a method in which “one case (or perhaps a small number of cases) are studied in detail.”¹² As a case study, the Abraham Accords offer insights into how traditional adversaries can find common ground and collaborate, presenting opportunities for regional stability and economic growth. The study has consulted both primary and secondary sources. Official governmental reports are consulted and interviews are conducted by the experts in academia. Secondary sources including books, newspaper articles, journals, research reports. Additionally, the document analysis method is employed as a primary method for examining the role of the Abraham Accords in redefining Middle Eastern relations. It focuses on interpreting and examining different documents for extracting meaningful information from the given text.¹³

Underlying Motivations behind the Abraham Accords

The Arab States and Israel became part of the Abraham Accords to pursue their political, economic, and geo-strategic interests. The major objective of the signatory states, among several others, was the containment of growing Iranian regional ambitions. Iran was perceived as a common security threat by all of the signatories' states.¹⁴ As far as interests of Israel were concerned, the Abraham Accords provided Tel Aviv with an opportunity to expand its diplomatic reach and to get access to the economic markets of the West Asia and MENA.¹⁵ Besides, recognition of Israel by several Arab States was another major breakthrough for a Jewish State. Moreover, another key actor, the UAE became part of the Abraham Accord to pursue its geopolitical and economic interests. Abu Dhabi agreed to diplomatic engagement with Israel in order to diversify its economy and by gaining access to Israel's advanced military technology and economic market.¹⁶ In addition, Bahrain normalized her ties with Israel for achieving political, economic, and security interests. She wanted to broaden and expand the US's commitment in the region to deter Iranian influence thereby assenting to rapprochement with Israel under American sway.¹⁷ Another major player, Morocco signed Abraham Accords to seek US favors in the dispute of the Western Saharan region. This diplomatic move strengthened the position of Rabat in the international arena concerning the Western

¹² Keith F Punch, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, (California: Sage Publications, 2005): 144.

¹³ Glenn A. Bowen, “Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method,” *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 27-40.

¹⁴ Imad Salamey, “Post-Arab Spring: Changes and Challenges,” *Third World Quarterly* vol 36, no. 1 (2015): 111-129.

¹⁵ Shiza Ahmed Butt, “Abraham Accords: Strategic Realignment within Middle East,” *CISS Insight* vol. 10, no. 1 (2022): 28-48.

¹⁶ Fred Lazin, “President Donald Trump's Abraham Accords initiative: Prospects for Israel, the Arab states, and Palestinians,” *Politics & Policy* 51, no. 3 (May 2023): 476-487.

¹⁷ Rafi Khan and Sajid Shehzad, “The Abraham Accords: Israel resizing Spheres of Influence,” *Journal of Research Society of Pakistan* 58, no. 2 (2021): 179-186.

Saharan region especially in comparison with the Polisario front.¹⁸ Moreover, Sudan's main priority was to be removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. The exit of Sudan from the list of state sponsors of terrorism was necessary for her to end her diplomatic isolationism and improve ties with Western states. Besides, the uplifting of sanctions gave her access to the international financial institutions for securing debt relief and investment opportunities.¹⁹

In addition to the signatories' states, the US played a decisive role in facilitating the Abraham Accords.²⁰ The domestic political, economic, and religious factors influenced American foreign policy towards the Middle Eastern region resulting in the clear shift in its foreign policy behaviour where it decided to reduce its military footprint in the Middle East. However, American military retreat from the Middle East during President Trump's first tenure (2017-2020) did not mean a complete withdrawal rather it wanted Israel to replace her as a significant player in the region to protect American interests.²¹ To secure American interests, the Trump administration supported Israel to work as its proxy in the region and attempted to bring closer ties between Israel and key Arab States of the region.²² Moreover, to seek support of the Evangelical Christians in the US who have pro-Israel views, President Trump brokered the Abraham Accords.²³ Another concern of Washington was to contain the Iranian influence in region.²⁴ It aimed to strengthen the influence of Israel and to checkmate Iranian capabilities in the Middle Eastern region. Furthermore, it aimed a united front against extremism, sectarianism, and terrorism by bringing these states together to build stable and peaceful Middle East.

Emerging Opportunities for the Signatories States of the Abraham Accords

The signing of the Abraham Accords is regarded as the starting of the new era in the Middle Eastern region as these accords normalized relations between Israel and several Arab states.²⁵ The normalization opened up new opportunities for these countries in various domains including economy, security, technological innovation, and cultural exchanges.²⁶

Economic Opportunities

The Abraham Accords have reshaped the Middle Eastern regional economic dynamics in a variety of ways. Following the signing of these Accords, trade and investment flows between Israel and the signatory states increased substantially. New opportunities for opening up markets, improved

¹⁸ Miriam Elman and Raeeza Shams, "We are Cousins. Our Father is Abraham...Combating Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism with the Abraham Accords," *Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute Journal* 13, no. 901 (2022).

¹⁹ Aziz ur Rehman, "Causes Behind the Abraham Accords and its consequences for the peace process in the Middle East," *The Middle East Journal for Social Sciences* 2, no. 2(2020): 73-83.

²⁰ Cagri Erhan, "Ensuring Stability and Peace in the Middle East," *Valdai Discussion Club* (2024): 887.

²¹ Waleed Hazbun, "US Military Strategy in the Middle East and the Challenge of Demilitarization," *Arab Centre Washington DC* (2022): 23-32.

²² Eyal Zisser, "Israel in the Middle East 75 years on," *Israel Affairs* (2023): 459-472.

²³ Mansoor Ahmad, Mohammad Ozair & Irfan Khan, "President Trump's Foreign Policy Towards the Middle East (2016-20): A Critical Analysis," *Pakistan Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 1 (2021): 71-90.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 71-90.

²⁵ Waleed Hazbun, "US Military Strategy in the Middle East and the Challenge of Demilitarization," *Arab Centre Washington DC* (2022): 23-32.

²⁶ Michael Singh, "Axis of Abraham: Arab-Israel Normalization could remake the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs* 101, no.2 (2022): 40-50.

bilateral relations and overall trade, and attracted foreign investments for all sectors.²⁷ A number of trade deals have been made and economic collaborations established. In May 2022, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement was signed between the UAE and Israel for strengthening economic ties and boosting trade and investment.²⁸ It also led to collaboration in the field of renewable energy, especially solar and wind sectors. Taking advantage of Israel's technological expertise, several joint projects are underway in the field of renewable energy.²⁹ Additionally, projects related to clean energy and climate change mitigation measures are also in the progress.³⁰ Notable environmental cooperation programs include the blue prosperity coalition, the Abraham Accords energy and water working group, green Middle East initiative, and the net zero by 2050 pledge.³¹

Security Opportunities

Within the framework of the Abraham Accords, security cooperation has also been upgraded between the signatory states, especially in the important domains of counterterrorism and intelligence sharing.³² This normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab states has led to the establishment of official channels for intelligence sharing.³³ Given the importance of cyber-attacks in the present era, all sides have embarked on a program for the development of robust defense mechanisms. In this respect, Israel-based cyber security firms are working with the UAE and Bahrain-based firms.³⁴ The Accords have laid the framework for military cooperation, joint military exercises and strategic alliances.³⁵ Defence contracts and procurements of advanced weapons systems from Israel are underway including missile defense technologies and unmanned aerial vehicles. Collectively, these developments indicate the growing affinities between Arab states and Israel that could in turn establish a joint mechanism to counter the common regional threats, especially those emanating from Iran.

Political Opportunities

Brokered by the US, the Abraham Accords provide western political support to the signatory states. Opportunities arise for future engagement with the US and the European Union who have promoted the idea of a unified Middle Eastern front against Iranian ambitions. Additionally, they have advocated for peace between Arab states and Israel for stability in the region. Western actors

²⁷ Daniel Egel, Shira Efron, and Linda Robinson, "Peace Dividend: Widening the Economic Growth and Development Benefits of the Abraham Accords," RAND National Security Research Division (2021).

²⁸ United Arab Emirates Ministry of Economy, UAE-Israel Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

²⁹ Asher Fredman, "Abraham Accords Climate Cooperation," Abraham Accords Peace Institute (2023).

³⁰ Interview conducted by the Author with Mansoor Jaffar, Editor Al-Arabia, on 23rd November, 2024 at Islamabad.

³¹ Will Todman, Lubna Yousef, and Mennah Abdelwahab, "The Unique Promise of Environmental Cooperation in the Gulf," Centre of International Strategic Studies (2023).

³² Interview conducted by Author with Mansoor Jaffar, Editor Al-Arabia, on 23rd November, 2024 in Islamabad.

³³ David Schenker, "Regional Security Cooperation Partnerships in the Middle East," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (2022).

³⁴ Marwa Fatafta, "Normalizing the Surveillance State- Cyber security Cooperation and the Abraham Accords," Middle East Report (2023).

³⁵ Shiza Ahmed Butt, "Abraham Accords: Strategic Realignment within Middle East," Centre for International Strategic Studies Vol. 10, no.1 (2022): 28-48.

especially the US has been the major driver of the Abraham Accords and played a key role in providing the diplomatic support to achieve the desired outcome. The Accord also reinforces regional alliances and partnerships to further share economic, political and security interests through the normalization process.³⁶ In doing so, Israel has been able to advance its recognition amongst the Middle Eastern states, while Arab States have been able to develop stronger ties with global powers. These scenarios bode well for regional de-escalation that has persisted for decades and opens up new ways to shape the region's geo-political architecture.

Social Opportunities

With the signing of the Abraham Accords, several opportunities opened up for the signatory states in the educational and social sectors proving to be the beginning of a new era in the educational and academic partnerships. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between Mohammed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence and Israel's Weizmann Institute collaboration for conducting research on Artificial Intelligence (AI).³⁷ Besides the higher education promotion projects, the Abraham Accords have provided the region with several opportunities regarding the vocational training and skill development initiatives for the enhancement of workforce capabilities. Many vocational centers have been established in collaboration with Israeli expertise and skills to provide training in the areas including technology, healthcare, engineering and environment. A prime example of this is the UAE's National Program for Coders which is aimed at enhancing coding and software skills.³⁸ Another area of collaboration under the Abraham Accords is healthcare innovation where Arab states are cooperating with Israel to access advances in best health practices and innovations thereby improving the lives of millions in the region.³⁹

Challenges to the Abraham Accords

The deep-rooted historical grievances, religious animosity, and ideological differences can hamper the Abraham Accords.⁴⁰ Besides, the protracted conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and Libya are other major challenges to the normalization of ties between Israel and the Arab States. However, a key challenge to the Arab-Israel peace process came from the shocking event of the flood of Al-Aqsa. In 2023, Hamas attacked Israeli territory from Gaza with rockets and mortars which caused serious casualties and infrastructural damages in the Israel. In response to the attacks of Hamas, Israel has retaliated brutally and conducted several military operations against Hamas in Gaza.⁴¹ The Genocide of Palestinian civilians and disproportionate use of force by Israel are undermining the Abraham Accords. Moreover, the level of economic development among the signatory states varies so significantly that it can create various bottlenecks in the economic integration process. States such as Morocco and Sudan have unstable economies and unable to attract foreign direct

³⁶ Nazhath Faheema, "Shifting Politics between Muslim states and Israel: From the Khartoum Declaration to the Abraham Accords," *Muslim Politics Review* 2, no.2 (2023): 163-207.

³⁷ Mehmet Osman, "Three Years of Abraham Accords and Israel-UAE Relations," (paper presented at 8th International Education, Business, Economics and Social Sciences Congress, Turkiye, September 28-30, (2023): 562-576.

³⁸ United Arab Emirates Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence, *National Program for Coders*.

³⁹ Interview conducted by the Author with Saima Rashid, M.Phil Scholar from National Defense University, an expert on the Arab-Israel Conflict.

⁴⁰ Christopher Phillips, "Beware of the Middle East's Forgotten Wars," *Chatham House* (2024).

⁴¹ Yara M. Asif, Imad K. Harb, and Laurie King, "The Hamas Attack on Israel: Context, Analysis, and Potential Repercussions," *Arab Centre Washington DC* (2023).

investment. Besides, Israel is disproportionately extracting more economic advantages, thus posing challenges to the Abraham treaties.⁴²

In addition to economic challenges, the opposition from Iran and its allies are another major challenge to Abraham Accords. Iran perceives the Abraham Accords as direct threat to her interests in region, thus, Tehran opposes these treaties which aim to isolate her in region. Besides, the internal dynamics of the Middle Eastern states such as domestic politics, public opinion, and regional alignments are effecting the normalization of ties between Israel and the Arab States. The ordinary masses of the Middle East have strong sentiments for the Palestinian Muslims thereby putting serious pressure on their respective governments which have recognized Israel and criticizing their respective regimes.⁴³ The resentment against their ruling elites can result in much wider protests and mass political opposition thereby threatening various regimes. The mass protests in the Middle Eastern States pose another challenge to the Abraham Accords.⁴⁴

Regional Impacts of the Abraham Accords

The Abraham Accords culminated in various implications for the Middle Eastern region. The repercussions of Abraham Accords encompass diplomatic rapprochement, shifting of regional alliances, and strategic realignment against Iran, economic integration, and erosion of the non-state actor's influence. First, the signing of the Abraham Accords triggered the normalization of relations between Israel and a number of Arab states.⁴⁵ The Abraham Accords broke decades of boycott against Israel by the Arab states and altered the diplomatic landscape of the region by shifting of alliances.⁴⁶ However, as these Accords were signed without considering the Palestinian cause for a separate independent homeland, thus, it prompted criticism from the Palestinian authorities and the Muslims across the World.⁴⁷

Second, a key impact of the Abraham treaties is the economic integration and cooperation among the signatory states. The UAE and Israel are cooperating in various fields including technology, healthcare, tourism, and renewable energy. For strengthening their economic ties, the signatory states have opened up their embassies, signed numerous bilateral trade agreements, and started direct flights.⁴⁸ Third, the Abraham Regimes have caused a strategic realignment against Iran, thereby Israel is seen by the signatory states as a strategic partner for countering Iranian influence in the region.⁴⁹ For strengthening the regional security cooperation, the signatory states are sharing intelligence, military collaborations, and conducting joint military exercises. The regional security

⁴² Shlomo Maital and Ella Barzani, "The Economic Impact of the Abraham Accords After One Year: Passions vs. Interests," *Samuel Neaman Institute for National Policy Research* (2021): 2.

⁴³ Dana El Kurd, "Assessing the Abraham Accords: Three years on," *Arab Centre Washington DC* (2023).

⁴⁴ Interview conducted by Author with Mansoor Jaffar, Editor *Al-Arabia*, on 23rd November, 2024 at Islamabad.

⁴⁵ Interview conducted by the Author with Saima Rashid, M.phil Scholar from National Defense University, an expert on the Arab-Israel Conflict.

⁴⁶ Ann Callahan, "The Abraham Accords and Future prospects," *Global Affairs and Strategic Studies* (2022).

⁴⁷ Polen Bayrak, "Abraham Accords: Palestine issue should be addressed for a peaceful Middle East," *Cappadocia Journal of Area Studies* 3, no. 1(2021): 104-115.

⁴⁸ Amr Yossef, "The Regional impacts of the Abraham Accords," *Modern War Institute series*, no.2 (2021): 1-17.

⁴⁹ Mansoor Ahmad, Mohammad Ozair & Irfan Khan, "President Trump's Foreign Policy Towards the Middle East (2016-20): A Critical Analysis," *Pakistan Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 1 (2021): 71-90.

dynamics have been altered due to the joint ventures and increased military cooperation among the signatory states.⁵⁰

Fourth, the Abraham Accords have contributed to a number of dialogues and negotiations among the signatory states and created new opportunities for diplomacy and conflict resolution in the region.⁵¹ It has also promoted the interfaith dialogue and cultural exchange. The increased people-to-people contact has the potential to bring about peace and harmony in the Middle Eastern region.⁵² Moreover, Abraham Accords have also created a mechanism for countering common problems such as climate change, water scarcity, and economic development.⁵³ Last, the Abraham Treaties have serious implications for the non-state actors in the Middle Eastern region. It has undermined the extremist ideology propagated by these radical groups such as Daesh and Al-Qeada by normalizing relations between the Arab States and Israel. Besides, it has provoked a few non-state actors including the Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, and the Houthis in Yemen. These non-state actors considered the normalization process between Israel and Arab States as a betrayal to the Palestinian cause thereby unleashing violence and propaganda to end this normalization process.⁵⁴ In Gaza, Hamas considered this normalization process as a conspiracy against the Palestinians and launched air strikes against Israel.⁵⁵

Conclusion

This research has analyzed the impact of the Abraham Accords on the transformative dynamics of the Middle Eastern region. It argues that regional states view the normalization of relations with Israel through economic, political and strategic lens and consider the agreement a pragmatic initiative to secure mutual benefits. The Arab states seek to gain by acquiring diplomatic leverages from the US besides getting access to Israel's military capabilities and advanced technologies. For Israel, political recognition by states including the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan advances its geo-political outreach and strengthens security. The Neo-liberal institutional framework in this context argues that states may pursue functional cooperation in the absence of conflict resolution framework for mutual gains. States may rise above historical differences by prioritizing shared strategic interests. Nonetheless, cooperation amongst states still faces challenges on account of geo-political tensions arising from the Israel-Palestine conflict, antagonism from Iran and its allies and domestic opposition groups that do not see the accord in alignment with the norms and values of Arab society. The durability of cooperation in accordance with the Abraham Accords rests on addressing these issues most notably the Palestinian issue, which remains at the center of enduring peace and stability in the region.

Policy Recommendations

⁵⁰ Joe Barnes & Robert Barron, "Trump Policy in the Middle East: Iran," *The Baker Institute for Public Policy* (2018).

⁵¹ Shiza Ahmed Butt, "Abraham Accords: Strategic Realignment within Middle East," *Centre for International Strategic Studies* Vol. 10, no.1 (2022): 28-48.

⁵² James Zogby, "A Framework for Middle East Peace and Stability," *Arab American Institute* (2024).

⁵³ Lior Sternfeld, "The Realignment of the Middle East," *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (2024).

⁵⁴ Polen Bayrak, "Abraham Accords: Palestine issue should be addressed for a peaceful Middle East," *Cappadocia Journal of Area Studies* 3, no. 1(2021): 104-115.

⁵⁵ Yara M. Asi, Imad K. Harb, and Laurie King, "The Hamas Attack on Israel: Context, Analysis, and Potential Repercussions," *Arab Centre Washington DC* (2023).

- The West should reassess its stance towards the Israel-Palestine conflict. Western states, especially the US, have a biased attitude toward Israel which has the ability to undermine its credibility to mediate in the conflict. There is a need for a more balanced approach which can contribute towards reduction in regional hostilities. Rather than supporting Israel's actions unconditionally, the Two-State solution should be emphasized for the resolution of this long-standing conflict.
- For addressing broader Middle Eastern conflicts, multilateral dialogue channels should be strengthened. Effective regional platforms should be created on the patterns of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, African Union, and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) where all the regional countries would have the opportunity to engage regularly for discussing shared interests.
- Joint economic developmental projects should be launched for both the signatory states of the Abraham Accords and also the non-signatories for addressing problems including poverty, unemployment, and resources management. People-to-people exchange programs should be established to reduce trust deficits.
- An annual Abraham Accords summit should be created where the signatory states and the neighboring states can discuss shared regional problems for addressing emerging issues and challenges. A permanent secretariat should be established for managing diplomatic, economic, and cultural exchanges and compliance should be monitored.